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THE GIFT OF

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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father
is perfect. St Matt V 48

Edward Gamble & Brother New York

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GENTILUCCI'S

LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN



MARY

EDWARD DUNIGAN & BRO NEW YORK

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THE LIFE

OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,

MOTHER OF GOD,

OF HER

Blessed Spouse, St. Joseph,

AND HOLY PARENTS

ST. JOACHIM AND ST. ANNE.

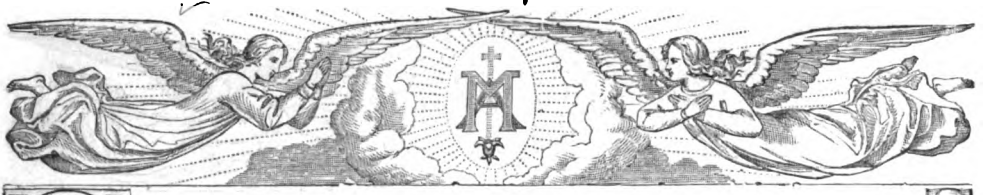


NEW YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN AND BROTHER,
(JAS. B. KIRKER.)
371 BROADWAY.
1860.



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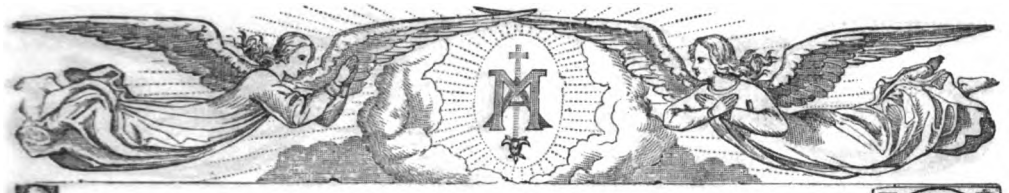
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ARCHIEPISCOPAL RESIDENCE,
NEW YORK, February 19, 1856.

We hereby approve of the English Translation of the Life of the Blessed Virgin, by Monseigneur Gentilucci, and give our consent to its publication.

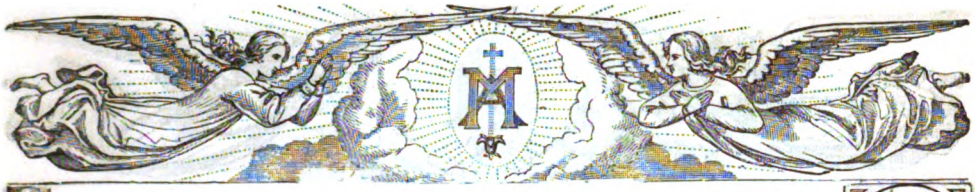
✝ John Abp of N York



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MOST HOLY FATHER,

As a devoted and affectionate ſon of the auguſt Mother of God, I have ſought to blend in this Life the graces of art, with thoſe of ſtyle, to render my work as eſtimable as poſſible, and render it a more agreeable tribute to the Virgin herſelf.

Deſiring to dedicate this work to an eminent perſonage, I felt bound to offer it, in preference, to one who combined the greateſt gifts of mind to the ſublime dignity of rank, and inferior to none in his love for the auguſt Queen of Angels. My mind immediately roſe to your Holineſs, who, combining in your perſon, the twofold majeſty of Head of the Church, and temporal Prince, are entitled to my homage as a Chriſtian and a ſubject. Nor was it a trifling honor for me to offer this work to a Sovereign, who was ſcarcely raiſed to the throne, before he became the love of nations, the joy of hearts, the delight of the people, and ſoon obtained a glory which the moſt beloved princes acquire only after long



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reigns, ſo that future generations, if they ſee the preſent age only in your Holineſs, will envy our day its happineſs.

If ſuch conſiderations impelled me to offer your Holineſs this book, one more encouraged me; it was your admirable devotion to Our Lady.

In fact, your Holineſs always ardently propagated devotion to Mary, as well in the outſet of your prieſtly career, in the exerciſe of the holy miniſtry, as in the diſtant regions of America, or in the Epiſcopal See of Spoleto and Imola, or, finally, in the chair of St. Peter, that mistreſs of the truth, which the Divine Son of Mary taught the world.

Deign then, Holy Father, to accept kindly this volume, which I have been permitted to dedicate to you; caſt a favorable look on theſe pages, which describe the angelic virtues, and mortal pilgrimage of the Immaculate Mother of God.

If all the qualities of art and ſtyle, which I would deſire, are not found in this volume, owing either to the greatneſs of the ſubject, or that of the name which I inſcribe at the head of my work, do not attribute it to my negligence, but to the difficulty of the work, and with the magnanimity so peculiar to your Holineſs, deign to favor my well-meaning efforts.

Rendering my thanks to your Holineſs, I beg the Bleſſed Virgin to give you a long and proſperous reign, and proſtrate at your ſacred feet, which I piouſly kiſs, I beg for myſelf and my family the apoſtolic bleſſing.

Your Holineſs's
Moſt humble, moſt devoted, and moſt obedient
Subject and ſervant,
ROMUALD GENTILUCCI.

Rome, March 25, 1848.

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PREFACE.



ON undertaking to write a life of the august Queen of heaven, again and again has my heart beat with such deep emotion, that I felt tempted to forego the task. While the piety for our august Lady which fills my heart, encouraged me to pay her this tribute of respect and love, I could not but recoil when I thought how many a sublime genius from the primitive ages of the Church, has devoted his pen to praise and bless the pure, immaculate Virgin, more ardent than the seraphim; that Virgin who is the glory of the prophets, the honor of martyrs, the crown of virgins, the fairest and holiest of all creatures; that Vir-

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gin in whose womb the only son of God chose to assume our mortal flesh, and who is therefore called the Mother of God.

My diffidence increased when I called to mind that a St. Anselm, a St. Augustine, a St. Jerome, all of admirable sanctity and the rarest gifts of genius, never spoke of Mary but with the greatest awe, and after avowing themselves unequal to so great an undertaking; and that a St. Bernard, with all his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, assures us, that whenever he essayed to express his love for Mary, he felt himself overcome by a holy awe; for we may truly say that a writer then endeavors to explain what the heart of man cannot conceive. And really, why should not my good will find obstacles, and discouragement at the sight of that immense sea, whose shores man is not permitted to salute, even from afar? Am I not, too, absolutely certain that I can add nothing new to what so many eminently learned and holy writers have penned, in countless works, in praise of that fair Judith, that glory of the heavenly and of the earthly Jerusalem, that honor of her people? These were surely reasons to discourage a greater writer than myself; what shall I say then of my own weakness, and my daily occupations, which for years back have left me so little time to devote to sacred literature and science? Still men of judgment and taste excited my courage; they reminded me, with the Fathers, that we should not refrain from praising Mary, on the ground that we cannot do it worthily, since none is worthy, and that moreover it is incumbent on every good son, however inferior his talents may be, to praise his loved mother, lest his silence be assumed as a proof of his ingratitude. These considerations

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had a great influence with me ; and I also remembered—and the recollection dissipated all my fears—that the Divine master eulogized the widow's mite, cast into the treasury of the temple, because the generous woman offered all she had, without making her poverty a pretext for offering nothing. I accordingly undertook the task, attempting only to gather and condense what the Holy Fathers and Doctors have, during eighteen centuries and more, said to the glory of the Blessed Virgin.

I was also sustained and encouraged by the incalculable protection which the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX. deigned to bestow on my work, even permitting it to be adorned with his august name. The words of veneration and love for the Divine Mother which he uttered on that occasion, determined me to overcome every obstacle, and bear this humble offering to Mary's altar.

Having thus given the reader my reasons for undertaking the work, I wish to declare here that I state nothing that is not based on the soundest authority, both because the present age demands it, and because he who speaks of Mary has so much to say, that he need not resort to suspected sources, but may drink in plentifully from the purest fountains. All that I say of the Blessed Virgin Immaculate is taken from Holy Scripture, the Fathers and Doctors of the church, or the most renowned lives of the Blessed Virgin. Among these latter, that published by Dom. John Chrysostom Trombelli, Abbot General of the order of the most Holy Saviour, deserves especial mention ; of this treasure (for so I may call his Latin dissertations) I

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have made constant use, selecting and abridging what suited my plan. If in any chapter I have dwelt more on some particular incident, analogous to my subject, it was to avoid the monotony into which such a work is apt to glide, and also to excite in the hearts of the faithful, devotion to the Queen of heaven.

This life is divided into four parts; the first comprises the history of Mary, from the moment when she was promised to the earth, after Adam's sin, till the vow of perpetual virginity which she made in the temple. The second, from her departure from the temple to the death of Joseph, her chaste spouse. The third contains the return of Mary to Jerusalem, after the death of her Divine Son. In the last I treat of the remainder of her life, of her blessed death, of her assumption into heaven, of her glory, her virtues, the devotion to her, and of all that can tend to the consolation of the faithful, and the honor of our august Queen.

Although nothing is more easily acquired than erudition, and nothing usually is more repulsive at first to a reader, I have deemed it best not to discard it altogether in these pages; hence I have added notes, wherever I deemed them proper, to satisfy curiosity and save the reader from laborious research. I have also taken care to note the passages of Scripture, the Fathers, Doctors, and Saints, on which my statements are based.

Reader, receive this work kindly; in it I have devoted all my care to honor the Blessed Virgin, our Mother and Queen.

My work, I confess, is poor from my want of talent, not

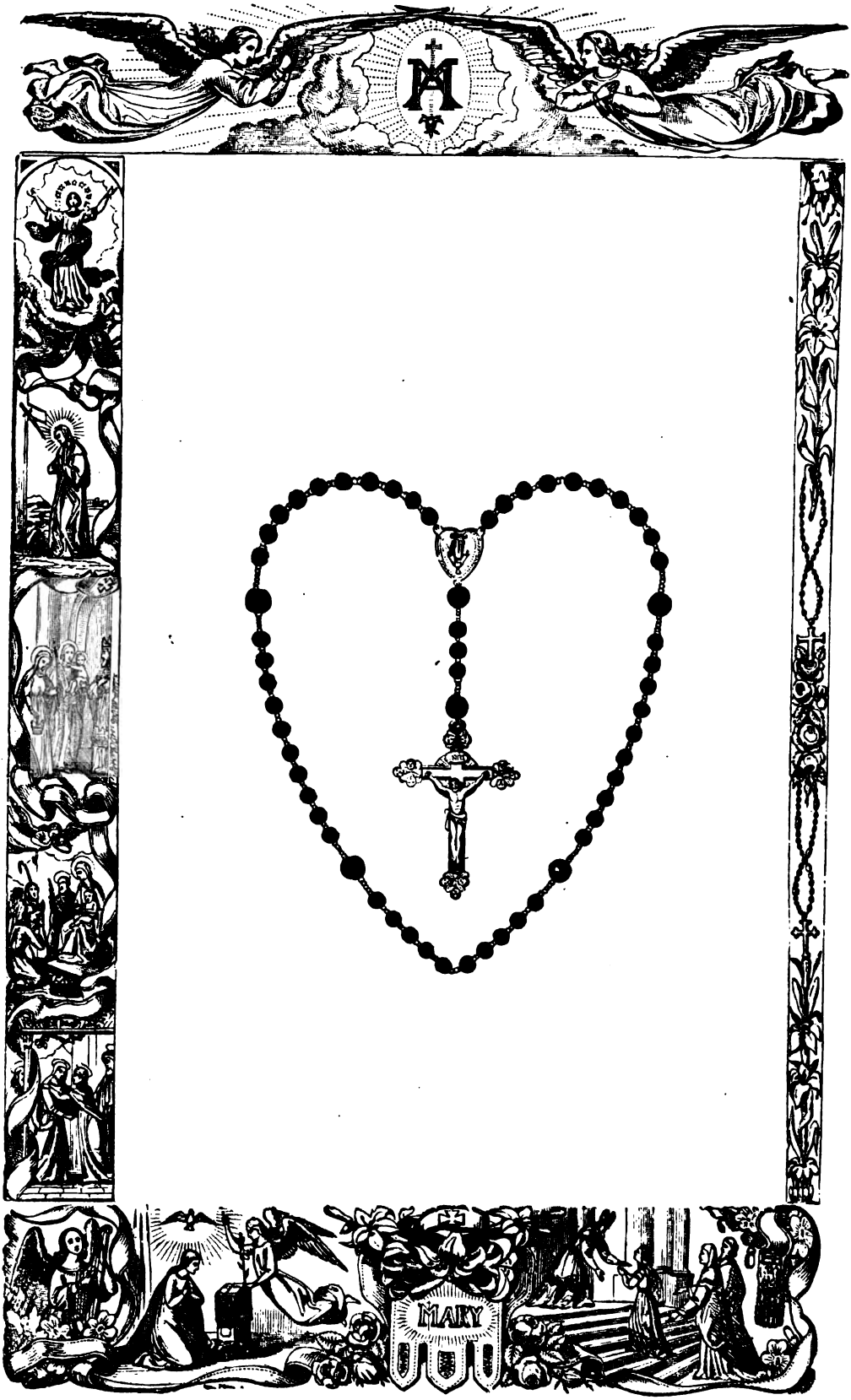


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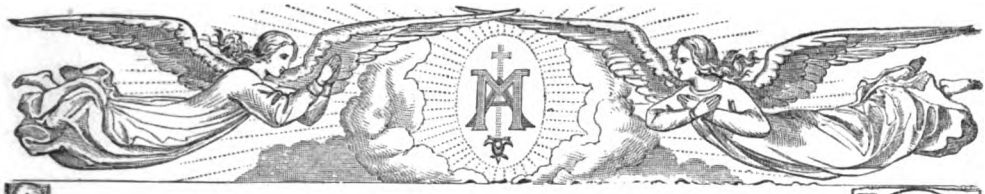
from want of affection ; I am consoled by the thought that it suffices to present Mary as a model worthy of admiration, if the reader has a firm will of following her in the exercise of the virtues which she practised in the most sublime degree. Dear reader, rest assured that this powerful Queen, on seeing the honor you pay her here, will ever lavish her graces on you in life, her assistance and blessings at the hour of death, and will secure you a seat beside her in heaven, to be eternally happy in the untold vision of God, which I sincerely wish you.



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Notice to the Reader.

The following volume is one which the Publishers have endeavored to make a beautiful monument of devotion and love to the Blessed Virgin. Three works enter into it, each regarded as equally solid in point of learning, and elegant in point of style: these are, the Life of the Blessed Virgin, by the Italian Prelate. Gentilucci; the Life of St. Joseph, her chaste spouse, from the Spanish of Father Vallejo; and the Lives of St. Joachim and St. Anne, by the devout Binet.

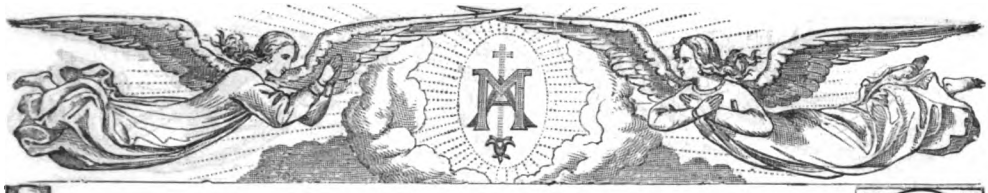
On their side they have spared no effort to make the mechanical execution of the work superior to any thing yet issued in this country, and both in the steel plates and in the headings for the Chapters, the initials, borders, and other ornaments, have sought to make art pay its homage to the Blessed Virgin.





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LIFE

OF THE

MOST BLESSED VIRGIN.

BOOK FIRST.

OF THE VIRGIN MARY FROM THE MOMENT WHEN GOD PROMISED HER TO THE EARTH, AFTER ADAM'S SIN, TILL THE VOW OF PERPETUAL VIRGINITY WHICH SHE PRONOUNCED IN THE TEMPLE.

CHAPTER I.

MARY PROMISED TO THE EARTH FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD.



F himself, and in himself, God, from all eternity, was perfectly happy. Possessed of all the attributes of the divinity, without any limit, it was his pleasure to display first in all its splendor his omnipotence, his almighty power. He gave being to what was not, and by the sole force of his sovereign



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word, existence to all that is on earth and in heaven. And after accomplishing in five days, the wonderful work of creating all these material things, he regarded them with his penetrating glance, and found them good.* Then resolving to create man, and make him lord of all beings, he kneaded him with his Divine hands from clay; and when he had formed him, he breathed into him an immortal soul, and called him into life.† But the Almighty saw that man, whom he had created to his image and likeness,‡ was alone, which surely was not good; he therefore cast him into a deep sleep, and while he slept, took from him one of his ribs, of which he formed woman. On seeing her beside him at his waking, man acknowledged her as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. The name of Adam was given to the man, and that of Eve to the woman.§

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* This approbation which God gave his works, was, in fact, his blessing.

† The breath of God, or the soul which he united to the body of man, was the principle of sentiment, reason, and life. The union of these two dissimilar substances, one material, the other spiritual, is one of the greatest wonders in nature. Man may feel, but cannot comprehend it.

‡ God created the world for man, and man for himself. He endowed him with sentiment and reason, to enable him to soar towards his Creator, admire his works, and render him thanks. He created him to his image and likeness, by giving him an incorporeal soul, immortal, endowed with will, understanding, and freedom, capable of wisdom, virtue, and grace, and destined to beatitude, that is, to see and possess God; in a word, man is the image of God, in that sense, that he has received from Him the attributes of an intelligent creature. This image, this likeness, is so inherent in man's nature, that he cannot lose it without losing his very nature. It may be obscured and tarnished by sin, but cannot be effaced or destroyed. (St. Augustine, Retract. Lib. II. cap. 24.) Man's body even has something grand and extraordinary. His face is made to look up to the heavens, while other animals are bowed to earth. He has two hands, the prime instruments of his reason and liberty. In his countenance, in his eyes especially, shines forth a reflex of the soul, and in some sort of the divinity.

§ *Adam*, the name which God gave the first man, signifies *earth*. *Eve*, the name of the woman, means *life*. In the Vulgate the Hebrew names have been preserved. They have lost their common signification, and have come to us only as proper names.

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Adam, the noblest and fairest creature issuing from the hands of God, for he alone was God's image, and received existence directly from him, was placed in Eden, * a delicious garden, where he enjoyed the felicity of paradise.—God, his Creator, had expressly threatened him with death if he tasted the fruit of a tree in the midst of the terrestrial paradise, known as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By this formal command to Adam not to touch the fruit of this one tree, while he might use the fruits of all the others for the nourishment of his body, † God, who had given man free will, wished to inculcate on him his supreme authority, by exacting on his part a blind obedience, and at the same time to

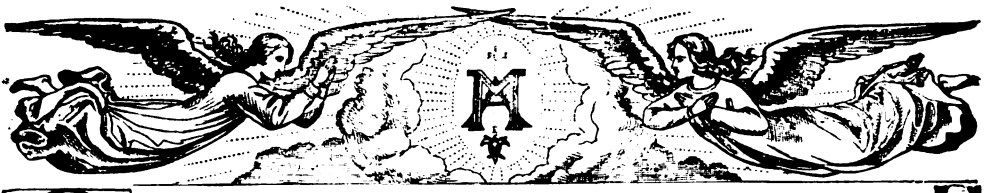
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* *Eden*, among the Arabs and Hebrews, is the name of the earthly paradise, and of the paradise of the elect. In Hebrew, it means *place of delight;* in Arabic, *a place suitable for herds to graze.* The Jews, according to St. Jerome, believed that Eden had been created before the earth, because the sacred text says that God planted it *in the beginning;* but the Holy Fathers, and both ancient and modern commentators, think that it was formed on the third day. Some, and but a few, hold that it was immediately after the creation of the first man. In fact, Moses tells us that God planted it for man's abode. It is very difficult to determine in what part of the world the Garden of Eden was, for commentators and interpreters alike agree that it was destroyed by the deluge.

† Two trees are mentioned in Genesis: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam was at liberty to eat the fruit of the former, which would have preserved his life, and preserved him from death for ever. It seems, however, that the first man never partook of it, either because his stay in Eden was short, as some authors say; or that having been created adult, he did not at once feel the want of nourishment; the reason of the belief is, that if he had eaten the fruit, his life would have been longer than that of any other man, while in fact he lived for a shorter period than Methuselah, Jared and Noe.

Yet physical reason would require a repeated use of the fruit to produce its salutary effects in man, inasmuch as he possessed only finite and limited powers. As to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it does not follow that it was injurious, because God forbid Adam to use it. The Creator simply wished to require of man a tribute of subjection, or obedience to his orders, of what kind soever, and to make him conscious that he was not the master, but simply the tenant of the abundant good things around him.

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terrify him by the chastisement which he would infallibly incur, if he transgressed the Divine command.

Adam was the only source of the human race, chosen to repeople the heavenly abodes, left unoccupied by the fall of the proud spirits who had been so justly expelled for presuming to think themselves, or attempting to render themselves, equal to God. He was the first human being endowed with reason, endowed by the Creator himself, with the most eminent gifts of nature and grace. God had constituted him the moral head of the human race, of which he was to be the father. On his will, which contained in germ, the wills of all his descendants, depended, either their common felicity, if he maintained the state of innocence in which God had created him, or eternal damnation, if he disobeyed the orders of the Almighty.

Unfortunately, he yielded to the allurements of Eve, who had been seduced by the wiles and crafty promises of the serpent, envious of the great happiness which man enjoyed.* Adam imprudently stretched out his hand to receive the fatal fruit which his companion offered him, and eat it. Hence that terrible fall, which hurled the whole human race, with its head, from the summit of happiness,† to the depths

* The name of *Nascasch*, which signifies *serpent*, has not been preserved in the Vulgate, where it is translated by its equivalent, *serpent*. This word is taken not only as a proper name given to the devil, but as that of the animal, of which he assumed the form to seduce the woman. See the reasons assigned by St. Thomas for the name of serpent given to the devil in Isaiah xxvii). See too the beautiful observations of Rosmini in his *Catecismo disposto secondo le idee*, as to the meaning of the words, Adam, Eve, Serpent.

† St. Augustine thus describes man's happiness in a state of innocence. "Man lived in paradise according to his will, because he willed only what God had ordained. He lived in the enjoyment of God whose goodness he had; he lived without wants, and might always have lived so. He had food, so as not to suffer hunger; he had the tree of life to save him from old age. No corporeal infirmity could dull his senses; he feared neither sickness within, nor injury from without.



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of unutterable woes. It lost its sovereignty to be buried in shameful slavery; after having till then been the object of the love and goodness of its Divine Creator, it became the object of his just wrath, and as it had become odious to Him by its rebellion, it was condemned to hell. And the first man having introduced sin into the world and by sin death, death became the sad heritage of humanity, all men having sinned in Adam. And as Adam's sin vitiated his whole race, and subjected it to death and eternal damnation, the posterity—which by carnal concupiscence, itself a punishment of sin, were to spring from him and his unhappy wife, the cause of his disobedience—should enter the world with the ghastly brand of original sin, which inevitably leads to eternal punishment.

And this fearful ruin was without a remedy; the generation of Adam was like a rock, which, loosened from the top of a high mountain, rolls to the depths of a valley, and lies motionless there. Age follows age; and of himself he cannot climb to the crest of the mountain to bask in the rays of the sun.* Thus the children of the first man possessed in

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Perfectly healthy in body, absolutely tranquil in soul. And as in Paradise there was neither heat nor cold, so he who dwelt there was exempt from fear and cupidity. He was a stranger alike to sadness and vain joy. God replenished him with true and abiding joy, and he raised to his Creator the affectionate outpourings of a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. As mind and body watched in concert, he observed the divine commandments without difficulty, and suffered neither listlessness nor fatigue. If sleep descended on him, it was a voluntary slumber."

* Manzoni has most beautifully employed this comparison in his beautiful ode on the Nativity.

As where from some tall mountain's crest
The rock betrayed by snow's insidious wile,
Roars down the craggy side amain
And clogs the darksome vale, a hideous pile.
In vain the ages circle past,
For ne'er the sun's warm rays that gild

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themselves no means of recovery. Neither Adam, nor any of his race, born of his loins in the natural order, could be adequate to offer to the Divine Majesty a satisfaction proportioned to the crime committed. In fact, due satisfaction supposes equality between the offender and the offended, the gravity of the fault increasing with the distance which sunders them. Who then does not see that man, completely limited in his nature and acts, cannot offer God, the essentially infinite one, more than a reparation infinitely inferior to his guilt, which measured by the distance that divides the creature from his Creator is infinite?

God might doubtless raise man from his fallen state by means unknown to us; he might, by virtue of his sovereign clemency, remit man's fault or be satisfied with such limited reparation as the guilty one was able to give. But divine justice cried aloud and exacted a rigorous satisfaction, and this satisfaction, as the Holy Fathers, and especially St. Thomas,* teach, could be given only by a divine person, who, blending the human and divine natures, becoming man without ceasing to be true God, should pay as man, what man owed God, and give, as God, an infinite value to the expiation which man offered God. Otherwise sin would have remained unexpiated to all eternity. Never would Adam and his race have escaped the miseries which attend and

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The summit, shall its exile reach.
No kindly hand its helplessness has filled.
So lay the heir of Adam's race,
That day God's just decree to woe consigned,
His haughty brow now bent in shame,
Heaven's glories all by sin and pride resigned.
Of thousands by that curse attaint,
Who to the dweller in light's unseen way
Can "pardon" cry? The covenant
Restore, or wrest from hell its prey.

* 3 p. q., 1. a. 2, ad. 2—in 4 distinct, s. 5, quæst. 2.

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embitter this life, except to plunge for ever into the abyss of hell.

But that God, who according to the word of the prophet,* forgets not his mercy, even in the midst of his wrath, was moved with pity at the sight of such woe. And in order to lower the pride of the devil and the affliction of humanity, he vouchsafed to console fallen, sinful man by the promise of a remedy for his misery. He announced to man a Sovereign Redeemer, who, by the union of two opposite natures, by suffering as man, and as God giving an infinite merit to the act of satisfaction, should rend the chains, in which man and his future offspring for ever groaned, wretched slaves of Lucifer.†

This promise was made when God, in displaying his justice against prevaricating man and inflicting upon him the punishment which he had deserved, turned to the

* Ps. xliv. 8. lxxxviii. 34, &c.

† How worthy of consideration is this clemency of the Almighty, who at the very moment when he displays his justice against sinful man, consoles him and his race, the heirs of his sin, by the promise of redemption. Theologians differ in opinion as to the mode in which this transmission of sin is effected. We shall only cite the three most probable opinions. According to the first, agreeable to the doctrine of St. Augustine, original sin is transmitted to men by generation or the union of the soul with a vitiated body, just as resemblance in features or disease is communicated by a father to his children. According to the second opinion, God made Adam the moral head of the human family, so that the will of all his descendants was comprised in his, and that their lot was to be happy or unhappy according to his conduct. The third opinion is that advanced by those authors who think that Adam, by his prevarication, having lost for himself and his posterity, the sanctity and justice which he had received from God, deserved for himself and them death and all corporal pains. It would be very difficult to give a sure and satisfactory explanation of this mystery, and it is far better to believe it blindly than to make it the subject of our disputes. "What doth it avail thee," says the author of the Following of Christ, "to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, if thou be void of humility, and consequently displeasing to the Trinity? In truth, sublime words make not a man holy and just: but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God. I had rather feel compunction than know its definition."

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serpent, that is to the devil, who had taken the form of the serpent to seduce Eve to prevarication, and said : " Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed ; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." * Which means : " By a woman, thou hast attempted to corrupt my creature, deform my image, ruin the human race, by making man imitate thy disobedience, in order to make him share thy eternal punishment, and thou hast succeeded in thy criminal design ; but thou shalt soon undergo an ignominious punishment, nor shalt thou long enjoy the success of thy craft. I shall raise up a woman to crush thy pride. I shall establish eternal enmity between thee and her, thy race and hers, and if thou hast overcome a weak woman, thou shalt be overcome by a strong woman who will trample thee under foot, crush thy head, and repair all the ravages thou hast committed in the world."

By this great and incontestable promise, God manifestly prophesied the ineffable mystery of the Redemption, by announcing to men a Saviour to be of woman born. She by becoming his mother, was to afford in him and by him, the reparation of the immense calamity which bowed down all the sons of Adam ; for it was written in the decrees of heaven that a woman's hand should restore what a woman's hand had destroyed.

But who was the woman thus announced by the Almighty in his oracle ? Evidently Mary, already blessed,

* Genesis iii. 14, 15. The Hebrew text and the Septuagint have "it shall crush," referring the promise not to Eve, but to her seed. The manuscripts and the Holy Fathers agree with the Vulgate. The sense is the same, however, in both, as the Blessed Virgin has truly crushed the serpent's head by the merits of Jesus Christ, her son.

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Mary, already from all eternity the object of his affection. The Blessed Virgin is certainly the woman announced by the Lord to the earth. "And of what woman," says St. Bernard,* "did God speak to Adam, if not of Mary? To what other Mary did he reserve so great a triumph? She it was who crushed the serpent's head by annihilating the snares which he spreads by the allurements of the flesh and the pride of the spirit." Mary is then the promised woman, whose foot was to crush his head, and whose heel he should endeavor to bite, by surrounding her by ever new but ever fruitless snares.

Thus by the promise of Mary and of the Saviour who was to be born of her in the fulness of time, God in his mercy foretold to man the reparation of the evils, which had been entailed by Adam's sin. Jesus Christ, according to the expression of St. Paul,† was and ever will be the sole object of man's hopes. By their faith in his coming, the just obtained the salvation, which his birth and passion were to secure them; and by faith in Jesus slain for our sins and risen for our justification, the elect obtained and will obtain salvation. But if men must recognize in Jesus Christ the principal and proximate cause of their redemption, of which he superabundantly paid the price on the cross, they must at the same time recognize in Mary, the secondary and remote cause of that redemption, since she gave humanity to the Eternal Word. In fact, as Jesus Christ is called, in the Holy Scriptures,‡ the new Adam, come to repair the ravages caused in man by the fall of the first Adam, so the Holy Fathers and Doctors proclaim Mary the second Eve, or rather the true Eve,

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* *Homil II. super Missus est. Serm. in Domin. inf. Oct. Assumptionis B. M. V*

† Epistle to the Romans, iii.

‡ 1 Corinthians, xv. 45.



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the mother of the living, chosen by God to give the world that Messias who has delivered man from the slavery of sin and the devil, has reconciled them to God, and brought them salvation and life everlasting. The Almighty himself, when he promised man a remedy for the fatal consequences of the sin, which a weak woman, seduced by the serpent, had brought upon them, declared to the earth the shameful overthrow of the serpent by means of another woman who should crush his head. By thus contrasting the Immaculate Virgin with frail Eve, God with his own lips inaugurated Mary's praises; and in a manner resumed all the graces, all the prerogatives with which he had endowed her; he manifested to men his tender love for her, and in advance proposed her to their gratitude and love.

The Holy Fathers and the Doctors of the Church have joyfully echoed this heavenly eulogy. They have glorified the restoring Virgin, and almost all contrast the new Eve, with the first Eve. Tertullian says of Adam's helpmate, that she was the portal by which the devil entered the world, the first creature that rebelled against the divine commands, the instigator of sin and the cause of the fall of Adam, whom the devil durst not tempt.* Ecclesiasticus had declared it before Tertullian.† "But," says St. Augustine, "if woman gave us death, another woman has restored us life. By Eve death, by Mary salvation. The former, seduced by the serpent, drank and gave to the first man the poisoned cup that has transmitted to us the venom of sin and everlasting death; the latter, by becoming the mother of the Word made man, prepared the salutary antidote which has saved

* Lib de Lic. Mul. c. t.

† "From the woman came the beginning of sin, and by her we all die." Ecclus. xxv. 33.

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us. Man fell by a woman, and by another woman has been raised up again, for the Virgin bore Christ." * St. Epiphanius does not express himself differently: "Where sin abounded, grace superabounds. From the fountain which gave death, we have drawn life; for he who by a woman, that is by Mary, became our life, has destroyed the death which another woman, Eve, had given us."† St. Irenæus is of the same opinion: "Eve by disobeying God brought death on herself and the whole world. And as Eve allowed the serpent to seduce her by crediting his words, and abandoned God by transgressing his command, so Mary by believing the word of the Angel commissioned to announce the divine mystery to her, obeyed God, and became the protectress not only of Eve, but of all her children—the human race subjected to death by Eve, having been delivered by Mary. Thus the knot which had been formed by the disobedience of the first woman was loosed by the obedience of the second; what had been bound by incredulity, was loosened by faith." ‡

St. Thomas, the Angelical Doctor, acknowledges that Mary brought the blessings of heaven to earth by making us children of grace and heirs of heaven. § St. Ildephonsus honors her with the title of reconciliator of men, whom she has delivered from the bondage of Satan and restored to the peace of God. ‖ St. Lawrence Justinian glorified God in Mary, and bursts out into a thanksgiving to God for calling her for his glory and our happiness to become the mother of the Word, the repairer of the world, the light of the uni-

* Serm. li. n. 3. and Serm. ccxxxiii. n. 2.
† Haeres. 78. n. 18.
‡ Lib. III. contr. haeres. ch. xxxiii.
§ Opusc. 8.
‖ *Serm. I. de Assumptione B. M. V.*

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verse.* St. Bernardine of Sienna exclaims: "Blessed be Mary, let all generations call her blessed, for she has repaired the loss of the angels, reconciled men, and rescued from hell those whom it had enslaved." † Endless would be our task were we to cite all the eulogiums, all the expressions of admiration, gratitude and love uttered to the Blessed Virgin by the saints, the Holy Fathers, and the Doctors of the Church. We shall merely in conclusion cite once more St. Bernard, who says: "If Eve was a poisonous thorn, which wounded us to death, Mary has been a rose, which has wonderfully and with sovereign power cured us." ‡ He rejoices with Mary, and proclaims her the object of the praise and blessings of all creatures, who acknowledge her as their repairer, since in her, with her and by her, has the right hand of the Most High restored what had been destroyed.

The divine oracle, which promised to the world the Virgin who was to bear the Son of God, the regenerator of the human race, fallen by sin, has been a constant tradition preserved in its purity among the children of Adam, from the deluge to the time when Moses committed it to writing in the book of Genesis. This prophecy of the woman promised by the Almighty to our first parents in Eden, the woman who was one day to crush the serpent's head, has indubitably been the source of the primitive ideas, which prevail in the theogonies of the different nations of the world; in all we find, amid alterations produced by time, some trace of the Virgin restorer, of the earthly paradise, the fatal sin or the tree of life; and from this the belief has been transmitted among infidel nations to our day.§

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* Quis Deum non honoret in Virgine, qui Virginem Dei voluit fieri genitricem, reparatricem sæculi, lumen mundi?

† *Serm. II. de B. M. a.* 1. *c.* 1. *t. III.* ‡ *Serm. de B. V. Serm. II. de Pentec.*

§ The Persians believe that the genius of evil, Ahriman, seduced our first

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It is moreover certain that this prophecy was maintained in all its truth and purity among the Hebrew nation. It was the source of the vows, the hopes, the prayers and the tears of all the patriarchs and all the just of the old law, who awaited its fulfilment. This great event occurred more than four thousand years after the creation of the world, and was first announced by the birth of the woman whom God had promised to our first parents after their sin, that is to say of

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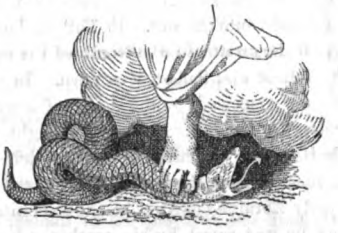
parents under the form of a serpent; and they gave the name of Athele to the solitary tree preserved amid the ruins of Babylon. The Thibetans say that the knowledge of their nakedness was revealed by their tasting the fruit of the Schime, which is as sweet and white as sugar. The Tartars attribute our fall to a plant of exquisite sweetness. The account of the woman seduced at the foot of the tree and that of God's wrath, were traditional among the Iroquois. The Brahmins give a wonderful account of their Chorcam or paradise, in which grew a tree that would have given man immortality had he been permitted to eat of it. They also believe that a God-made man was to be born of a virgin, by divine operation; hence the incarnation of their Juggernaut and the birth of Krishna in a grotto where he was adored by shepherds and angels. The Lamas have their Buddha, born of the virgin Maha-Mahai. Sommono-Khodom, legislator and God of Siam, is the son of a virgin who conceived by the rays of the sun. Lao-Tseu became incarnate in the womb of a black virgin, compared to jasper for her wondrous beauty. In Paraguay a woman of surpassing beauty becomes a mother, yet remains a virgin; and her son, after performing numberless miracles, is carried to heaven in the presence of his disciples, and is transformed into the sun. In Thibet, Japan, and some parts of India, the God Fo became incarnate in the womb of the nymph Llamoghiuprul, espoused to a king, the fairest and holiest of women. In China, Shing-Mu, the most popular of goddesses, conceived by the touch of a water lily, and her son brought up by a fisherman, became illustrious and wrought miracles. Dogdo has a dream and a vision in Babylon; the heavenly light which illumined her countenance while she slept, renders herself as beautiful as the day star. Zerdusht, Zoroaster, or more properly Ebraïm-zer-Ateucht, the celebrated poet of the Magi, is the fruit of this vision; he was saved by his mother, when the tyrant Nembrat killed all the pregnant women in his kingdom, because his astrologers had foretold that a child about to be born would menace his gods and his throne. Among the Egyptians, the zodiacal Isis is a virgin mother. That of the Druids was to bear the Saviour, &c. &c. See ELIAS SCHEDIUS *De Diis Germ.* cxiii.; KIRCHER; TAVERNIER; BOULANGER; ROSELLI DE LORGNES, *Le Christ devant le Siècle*, c. ix.; MURATORI.





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our loved and holy Mary. She crushed the head of the old serpent, who could not even for an instant hold her as his slave. By her came into the world, without the aid of man, that only Son of God, begotten from all eternity by the Father without the aid of woman. Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of Mary in time, after a life of suffering for three and thirty years, and by the price of all his blood shed on the cross, paid superabundantly the debt, which guilty man had contracted by insulting the Divine Majesty. Conqueror of death and hell, destroyer of sin, he tore the terrible decree of eternal damnation, and reconciled man with God, heaven with earth. Mercy and justice thus united by a bond of peace and love, a new eternal covenant was sealed between the Creator and the creature ; man recovered his rights to the heritage of heaven, and the heavenly promise of Eden was abundantly fulfilled.



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CHAPTER II.

GRACES NECESSARY TO THE HOLY VIRGIN, PROMISED TO EARTH, AND CALLED TO TAKE PART IN THE REDEMPTION OF THE HUMAN RACE.



THE sin committed in Eden by the first man cannot be sufficiently deplored, whether we consider the outrage committed against the Divine Majesty, or the fatal consequences which it produced in man.* Nevertheless this fault has been the blessed occasion for God the Creator to bestow on the sons of Adam, two incalculable favors; a God made

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* To the happy abode of our first parents in the earthly paradise, must be attributed the origin of the beautiful fable of the Age of Gold, which Ovid thus describes:

"Aurea prima sata est ætas, quæ, vindice nullo,
Sponte suâ, sine lege, fidem rectumque colebat.
Pœna metusque aberant: nec verba minacia fixo
Ære legebantur; nec supplex turba timebant
Judicis ora sui; sed erant sine judice tuti."



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man, and a woman at once Immaculate Virgin and fruitful mother of God himself; impenetrable mysteries by which the Almighty wished to show that he can in turn let evil arise out of good and draw a sovereign good from sovereign evil.

God in his infinite foreknowledge, could not doubtless but have foreseen from all eternity the fall of the first man, and consequently that of all his descendants; moved with pity at so great a catastrophe, he could not but conceive at the same time the project of a generous reparation, that would restore the human race to the paths of eternal beatitude, for which it had been created. And as to the manner in which this reparation was to be effected, we must reflect, that if God could not but have countless ways to accomplish it, his heart filled with love was not satisfied with a merely sufficient reparation; by an excess of charity he wished to give and receive a satisfaction, at once complete, superabundant and infinite; he wished to grant guilty man two intercessors, Jesus Christ and Mary, that is to say, in the person of the Son of God a mediator with God the Father, and in the

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"The golden age was first, when man yet new,
No rule but uncorrupted nature knew;
And with a native bent did good pursue,
Unforced by punishment, unawed by fear.
His words were simple and his soul sincere.
Needless was written law, where none opprest;
The law of man was written in his breast.
No suppliant crowds before the judge appeared;
No court erected yet, nor cause was heard;
But all was safe, for conscience was their guard."

DRYDEN.

This fable, as Banier remarks, is explained by the tradition transmitted among the nations from Noe, who, instructed in the history of the patriarchs, must have recounted to his descendants the happiness which Adam enjoyed in the garden of Eden, and the punishment which the first man and his descendants had incurred by sin.

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person of the Mother of God a mediator with her Son. Accordingly when in Eden he announced redemption to sinful man, he revealed to him, that the ineffable mystery of a God made man would be accomplished, in its destined time, by means of an extraordinary woman. This was necessarily so, for the honor of the Divinity, that no sacrilege should reach the Son or the mother. The Eternal Word, born in time, was to receive his mortal form from a mother ever virgin, ever worthy to co-operate in that great work of clemency and love.*

The Deity in his three persons was to dwell and manifest himself in the bosom of that woman of predilection. God the Father was to take up his abode in her so that he might call her his daughter. The Eternal Word was to receive from her the pure blood and blessed flesh to accomplish the divine mystery, and thus make her really his mother. The Holy Ghost was to accomplish in her, by superhuman ways, the ineffable incarnation of a God, and thereby raise her to the rank of his spouse. In a word, she became the just temple of the Most Holy Trinity, by bearing in her chaste



* Mary was to be at the same time spouse and virgin. It became the Divinity of the Word and the object of redemption that he should be born so. Without citing all the reasons here, it will suffice to remark that the conception of Jesus, eminently holy by essence, and come into the world to efface sin, could not nor should in any way belong to sin, or any thing that recalled it. The ordinary reproduction of the human race is attended by the disorder and turpitude which original sin has introduced into the world. It was not becoming then that He who was to annihilate sin and concupiscence should be born by a work of sin. Moreover, the Divine Word, come into the world to be the Father of men according to the Spirit only, was far better manifested by being himself born of a virgin. And she at the same time ought to be married: 1st, to keep the better concealed from Satan the superhuman work of redemption: 2d, to shield the honor of the virgin; 3d, because St. Joseph would be required to fulfil the functions of guardian of Mary, and foster-father (*nutricius*, say the Holy Fathers) of Jesus, and watch over his early years.



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womb, him whom the very heavens cannot contain. With what precious gifts, with what eminent prerogatives, with what extraordinary virtues was not such a woman to be enriched and adorned! When an earthly monarch rears a palace, he seeks to make the pile correspond to his high dignity, his birth, his greatness, his riches; his very honor requires it. Such being the case, we see that the Almighty alone could prepare and form for himself the woman whom he had chosen for his abode, in order to render her worthy of him and of so great an honor.

Among the wonderful works which King Solomon executed to display his power and authority, the splendid throne which the Holy Scriptures describe certainly holds no mean rank. It was an ivory throne of majestic size and elegant form, all splendid with the purest gold; six steps led up to it, and the top of the throne was round behind, while two arms ending in hands ran down to the seat on either side. On the right and left was a lion standing by the arm, and twelve other lions reposed on each side on the six steps of the throne. Such was this masterpiece, which, according to the sacred text, could not be equalled in any other kingdom.* If we are allowed to compare the handiwork of the creature

* III Kings, x. 18–20. This throne, says the commentary, is the figure of Mary, whose virginal womb was the abode of God for nine months. After her birth she held him in her arms, as it were seated on his throne, and there he was adored by the wise men who offered him presents as his tributaries and vassals. The ivory throne denotes Mary's purity and its greatness, that of the Blessed Virgin, which is inferior only to God's. The gold with which it glittered, signifies the fervent charity of Mary. The six steps which led up to it, marked the six great kings that she numbered among her ancestors; David, Solomon, Asa, Josaphat, Ezechias, and Josias. The arms and hands which compassed the seat, allude to the labors of the active and contemplative life of the Mother of God, which represent all degrees of perfection. The two large lions symbolize the fortitude which she displayed in the hour of difficulty and trial; or, if we follow the interpretation

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with the works of the Creator in order to form an idea of the latter, what must not have been the magnificence of that living throne which an Almighty God prepared for himself!

The works of God are all perfect * and adapted to the ends for which he created them. The woman whom he had selected to second him in the incomparable work of the Incarnation of a God, was therefore to be perfect, and to correspond worthily to so high a destiny. She should be such that it would be impossible to find her equal in heaven or on earth. Then, in order that there might be some proportion or resemblance between the son and the mother, it was necessary that she should be, in the natural order, absolutely superior to all other women. It was necessary too that her soul should be perfect, and worthy to receive that superabundance of graces which the Almighty was to pour out upon her. But for her to be such as God wished her, it was indispensable that God should himself prepare and form that privileged creature by extraordinary means, and this God actually did.

To be known by God, is to be his elect, that is to say, to enjoy an intimate familiarity with him, to love him with a special love, to belong entirely to him.† On the opposite side, not to be known by God, is equivalent to not being loved, to being rejected by him.‡ Now of all creatures Mary

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of St. Peter Damian, they are the figures of the Archangel Gabriel and St. John the Evangelist, who were the guardians, the one of her soul, and the other of her body. The twelve smaller lions represent the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, of which St. Paul speaks to the Galatians: "Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Benignity, Goodness, Longanimity, Mildness, Faith, Modesty, Continency, Chastity." (Gal. v. 22–3.)

* Deut. xxii. 4.

† "I know my sheep" (John x. 14). "The Lord knoweth who are his." (II. Timothy ii. 19.) "I know thee by name." (Exod. xxxiii. 12.)

‡ I never knew you; depart from me you that work iniquity. (Matt. vii. 23.) "Nor will I be mindful of their names by my lips." (Ps. xv. 4.)



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was the first known and best known by the Creator, who having resolved to give men his own Son, must above all know her who was to be his mother. In her he knew an accomplished soul, a luminous intellect, a will ever inclined to good, an unalterable sincerity, foresight and wisdom. He knew her as pure, noble, holy, perfect, enriched with all gifts and all prerogatives, adorned with every virtue. He knew her and loved her with such a love, that the human intellect and even the heavenly intelligences cannot, says St. Anselm, measure her greatness.* Having thus known and loved her, God chose her for himself among all creatures; she became his delight, and from all eternity he predestined her to the supreme honor of being his mother; then by a form which "the Lord possessed in the beginning of his ways," he foretokened and promised her to men in the person of that woman whose endless hostility threatened the infernal serpent.

Mary being, from all eternity, predestined to be the mother of the Divine Word, what graces must not God have lavished upon her to fit her for so eminent a dignity! The excellent work of the Creator's hands, the special object of his thoughts and love, formed by the Lord himself to be the delight of his heart, Mary was rather the product of grace than of nature. According to theologians grace is given in proportion to the love which God bears a soul, since the object of love in the supernatural order, is sanctifying grace, which increases in proportion to that love, for the reason that the effect increases with the cause.† Thus Mary having been, of all creatures, past, present, and to come, the most beloved of God, it follows that God has poured out upon her an abundance of graces, favor, and prerogatives, which shows

* De Exc. Virg. c. iii. and c. viii.

† Suarez. Disp. IV. sect. I. in 3 p.—et in 3 p. Disp. XVIII. sect. IV.

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that the three Divine persons, as it were in rivalry strove to enrich her with their most precious gifts.

God the Father, having from all eternity a Son who proceeds from him by the way of intelligence, and having chosen in time a daughter who proceeds from him by the way of love, has really shared with her the sceptre of his power. The Eternal Word, which is Wisdom itself, wished also by gratitude to enrich his mother, and implanted in her a wisdom of which no human mind can realize the perfection. The Holy Ghost, who is Love itself, communicates to her his flames, and makes her heart a burning furnace of charity. We must not then be astonished to find the Doctors of the Church and the Holy Fathers speak incessantly of the graces granted by the Lord to Mary. St. Bonaventure, St. Peter Chrysologus, St. Bernardine of Sienna, and St. Antoninus * say that she possesses as many as it was possible to unite in one creature, prepared by divine favor to receive an immeasurable grace. St. Anselm proclaims this grace as prodigious, unspeakable; † St. Bruno exalts its singular abundance; ‡ St. Eucherius says that grace was lavished without measure on Mary; § St. Sophronius affirms that the Blessed Virgin was all grace predefined; ‖ St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. John Damascenus, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Peter Damian, ¶ and many others whom it

* Bonaventure in I. Sent. distinct, 44.—Peter Chrysolo. Serm. III. de Annunt.—Bernardin. Sen. t. 1. conc. 61. art. 2. c. x.—Anton. 4. p. tit. xv. c. ii. § 15.

† De Exc. V. c. iii.

‡ Serm. de Annunt.

§ In fer. IV. Dom. IV. Adv.

‖ Serm. de Assumpt. (This discourse is sometimes cited as St. Jerome's.)

¶ Basil. In Caten. in cap. ii. Luc.—Aug. De Nat. et Gr. cap. xxxvi. Thom. Aq. Opusc. viii. and iii. p. q. 27 art. 2.—Jo. Dam. Orat. ii. de Natu. et Orat. ii. de Dormit. Virg.—Greg. Naz. Trag. de Chr. pat.—Vince. Fer. Serm. I. de Nat. Virg.—Peter Damian. Serm. III. de Nativ. Virg.—Epiph. Orat. de Laud. Deip.—Ildeph.

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would be too long to cite, assure us that Mary had all the plenitude of grace, and give her such epithets as "boundless ocean," "immeasurable sea," "profound abyss of grace;" St. Cyprian does not hesitate to say that such grace was due to the Mother of God.* And while all agree in admitting that Mary was the object of more graces than have ever been bestowed on men and angels, they all add with one accord that Mary was completely worthy of them; so that St. Gregory the Great concludes, she merited Divine Maternity.

The Virgin, thus loaded with all the graces of heaven, conceived in the divine thought before the depths were created, before the earth existed, came forth from the bosom of God, when he was pleased to manifest her to the angels as his mother, in the same manner that the Divine Word was manifested to the world, when he had been born of his mother in time. This manifestation which God made to the angels, was the origin of the sin of Lucifer,†—driven from

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Serm. VI. de Assumpt.—Alb. Mag. ap. Dyon. Rich. l. II. de Laud. C. V.—Ricc. a S. Laur. lib. de laud. B. M. V. etc.

* Serm. de Nativ. Chr.

† We do not know the precise cause of this war, termed in the Apocalypse "a great battle in heaven" (xii. 7). Certain it is that it sprang from the pride of the angels who refused to submit to God. But it must ever remain a matter of doubt on what this presumptuous audacity was based. St. Bonaventure considers the prevarication of the angels under three points of view: in its principle, in its progress, and in its results. He affirms that their fault began by presumption, when they saw themselves endowed with so great beauty; that it increased by ambition, when they aspired to a state supreme to that which became them; and that it resulted in a horrible feeling of hatred against God, when they saw their Creator traverse their arrogant design. Other doctors assign another cause for the pride of Lucifer and his accomplices. It had been revealed to them that the Eternal Word would at one time become man, that his sacred humanity should be adored by all creatures, and that it should occupy the highest place in heaven by sitting at the right hand of the Most High. Lucifer, jealous of so high a destiny, was ambitious of obtaining for himself this sovereign glory, deeming the angelic nature more exalted than man's. And this is perhaps what Our Lord meant,

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heaven with his accomplices,—for having, according to many Fathers, refused to adore the Divine Word under the human form which Mary was to give him on earth in the fulness of time. Hence it follows that the Blessed Virgin was the first creature predestined in the bosom of God, where all the elect ar conceived. The head of the predestined is Jesus Christ. But as Jesus Christ is the eldest son, Mary is the eldest daughter. And if, in the eternal predestination, Jesus Christ, in consequence of his dignity as God and man, was the first thought and first object of God, the second thought and second object of the same God was Mary, in consequence of her dignity as mother of the Eternal Word.

Hence the Abbot Rupert, applying to the Blessed Virgin some verses of the Canticle of Canticles, says that Mary in the designs and forecast of God, was ever present to the Divine thought, even before he laid the foundations of this vast universe and established the admirable order by which it is regulated. Of all the doctors of the Church, Cornelius à Lapide has most particularly treated of this subject. "God," says he, "created the heavens thinking of that animated heaven, where the divinity in all his glory was to dwell corporally. He resolved to make her more beautiful, to enrich her with greater purity, charity and sanctity than the very heavens. He created the air and the fountains of waters, and he had in his mind Mary, who was to be a sweet restoring zephyr over the miseries of the sons of Adam, a never failing fountain of grace, and he prepared to lavish his favors upon

when addressing the Jews, he told them (John viii. 24), that they wished to do the works of the devil, who had been a murderer from the beginning. In fact, Lucifer was scarcely created, when he envied the humanity of Christ, its union with the Divine Word, and committed against him an intentional homicide by infusing into the minds of the Jews his criminal desire, in order that they might accomplish it by the Redeemer's death.

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her. He created the sea and enclosed it within its limits, thinking of that immense sea of divinity which was to be enclosed in the Virgin's womb; he destined her to be herself a boundless sea of goodness. He created the earth, and setting it as a centre towards which all gravitates, he thought of Mary to make her the centre of the perfections and prerogatives of men and angels. And that this work of his predilection should be incomparable, God stamped on every creature that came from his divine hands an image as it were of the graces which he blended in her. The angels recall her virginity, the cherubim her wisdom, the heavens her purity, the stars her splendor, the fields and flowers her beauty, the ocean her greatness. But the chosen Virgin unites all these perfections in a supreme degree. Hence that excellence, that superiority of Mary over all creatures, which makes St. Bernard style her "the masterpiece of all ages."

Before being conceived and given to the world, the Virgin was announced and foretold to men as predestined to co-operate in the redemption of man by becoming the happy mother of the Saviour. She was first announced in Eden, as we have seen, and then by the prophets, who predicted her in a thousand ways, as we shall show. God, who had showered down all his graces on the privileged woman promised by him to the earth, and who took delight in so perfect a creature, wished, long before her entrance into the world, to beatify by her presence one of the sons of Adam. According to the Ecclesiastical history, and based on the declaration of St. John the patriarch, St. Dorotheus, and St. Epiphanius,* this favor was granted to Saba, father of the prophet who was borne to heaven. He beheld Mary all radiant with beauty, purity, modesty, sanctity and justice, and around her a

* De Inst. Monac. c. 40. 7 p. Biblioth. Pat. de Vit. Proph.

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devoted and respectful crowd of men and young virgins clad in white, with heads encircled by a halo of fire. A countless array of patriarchs and prophets, who saw her in spirit, and acknowledged her as the mother of the Messias, have spoken of her in terms full of respect and love. In fine, the Angels saw her in the Word when they were admitted to the clear vision of God, and bowed down before her as their Queen.

The Holy Fathers and Commentators accordingly have never failed to apply to the Blessed Virgin a great many passages in the Canticle of Canticles. When explaining, for example, the verse, which says that the spouse cometh up from the desert breathing precious perfumes,* they have seen in that beloved spouse only Mary, heralded and expected in the world, robed in garments of candor, enriched with all virtues. By all this we have shown evidently the ardent desire which all men had to behold the appearance in the world of that Virgin, adorned with all the gifts of nature and grace, who had been chosen to be the Mother of the Divine Redeemer. Universal and incessant prayers were addressed to God that she might soon be given to the earth, since by her birth was to be accomplished the object of their vows, the ransom of man. Hence St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. John Damascenus, agree in saying that Mary was begotten by the continual prayers of men.†

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* Cant. iii. 6.

† Frequens oratio illam mundo peperit. Hæres. 29. De Chr. Nat. l. IV. c. xv.

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CHAPTER III.

SYMBOLS UNDER WHICH THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN IS INDICATED AND PREFIGURED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

IN this world signs precede all that happens. When the sun is about to rise, the horizon is painted in a thousand shading dyes, the east is all on fire. When a tempest comes on, a low murmur is heard on the banks of the sea, and the waves seem spontaneously to be vexed and agitated. The rising of the sun of justice, Jesus Christ, and of the star of his mother Mary, had likewise their signs in the symbols and figures of the Old Testament.

After the promise of redemption, which God made to man, and during the course of the forty centuries, which constituted the mysterious fulness of time, the Almighty, by a wonderful series of figures and symbols, announced the accomplishment of that promise, that is to say, the coming of the Divine Reparator and of the Virgin who was to be his

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mother in time. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have pointed out as images of Mary's purity, excellence, greatness, and virtue, the garden of Eden, Eve in her innocence, the Ark of Noe, the dove let loose from the ark, Jacob's ladder, the burning bush of Moses, Aaron's rod, Gideon's fleece, Solomon's temple, the Ark of the Covenant, the cloud of Elias, the closed gate, the sealed fountain, the rose of Jericho, the cedar of Lebanon, the palm tree of Cades, &c.

But the symbols of this glorious Virgin are too many and too full of mystery for us to enumerate them all. We shall mention those of which the Fathers and Commentators have spoken most frequently, and shall follow the order in which they occur in the sacred text.

THE LAND OF EDEN,* before being struck with a curse in consequence of Adam's sin, was of admirable beauty, and produced spontaneously without human labor, because it was fertilized by a stream which had its source in the midst of Paradise. It is a symbol of Mary at once a Virgin and fruitful. The mother of our Saviour produced her divine fruit without the intervention of man, and by the mysterious operation of the Holy Ghost, who is designated, as St. Augustine remarks, under the name of Fountain of the Living.† St.

* Eden, the name of which signifies *delight*, is a province of the East, in which it is said the garden of Paradise lay. The Scripture in several places names the land of Eden. It probably extended into Armenia, and contained the head-waters of the Euphrates and Tigris. The following is the description given of it in Genesis (ii. 8-9): "And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning; wherein he placed man whom he had formed. And the Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold and pleasant to eat of." All was charming, all ravishing in that happy abode. "And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from thence is divided into four heads" which water the four parts of the world. These four rivers of which Moses speaks in his account of Paradise, lead some to believe that Eden was situated in Armenia.

† De Gent. cont. Manich. L. 2. n. 37.

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John Damascenus, addressing the Blessed Virgin, exclaims! "Thou art the spiritual Eden, more holy, more divine, than the Eden of old; for Eden was the abode of Adam, and thou hast been the abode of God, come down from heaven to dwell among us." *

EVE IN HER INNOCENCE was a symbol of Mary. Formed by the hand of God himself, she was embellished with his gifts and graces. Mary was the work of the Creator, who in her prepared for himself an abode worthy of himself, and adorned her with his choicest gifts and graces. Eve has been called the mother of the living; but, as St. Epiphanius remarks,† she received this name only after having heard the sentence: "Thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return;" that is to say, after sin, and only because the human race was to be born of her. Far more justly, can Mary be called the mother of the living, since, by bringing forth Jesus, she introduced the true life into the world. Our Redeemer proclaimed her at the foot of the Cross, the mother of all men, in the person of John, and she aids all her children to obtain the life of grace. Besides, although Jesus Christ alone sufficed for the salvation of man, it had pleased God that the two sexes should concur in the ransom of the human race, since both had combined to effect its ruin; and as St. Bernard says,‡ God did not wish to annihilate man, his creature, when he was degraded by sin, but only to restore him by transforming him into a new man; and as Adam was renewed in the person of Christ, hence called the new Adam, Eve was in like manner as it were transformed into the person of Mary, who has received the name of the new Eve.

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* Orat. de Dormit. Virg. n. 8.

† Haer. 78. n. 18. ed. Petav.

‡ In Serm. infr. Oct. Assumpt. De duodecim prærogativis B. M. V.

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THE ARK OF NOE,* which saved from the flood those who took refuge in it, and in which the human race was preserved to repeople the earth after the universal catastrophe, was a precursor sign of Mary, who by her consent to the incarnation of the Word in her womb restored to the children of Adam, by means of redemption in Christ, the life which they had lost, and reinstated them in the possession of their rights to their heavenly birthright. Hence St. John Damascenus says: "The ark in which the seed of the second world was preserved is a symbol of thee."†

And not to diverge from what relates to the ark, we shall mention here as another emblem of Mary, that pure dove which returned to the ark on so swift a wing, bearing in its bill a twig of the olive. It is an image of the Blessed Virgin giving to the nations the Prince of Peace.

In JACOB'S LADDER,‡ Mary is again foretokened. The patriarch saw in sleep a ladder extending from earth to heaven; above was the Almighty, and on the steps angels ascending and descending. This ladder is the Virgin whom God

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* By God's express command, Noe began to build the ark near where Babylon was, in the year of the world 1556. It was three hundred cubits long, fifty wide, and thirty high. It was rectangular, and its height was not great. It was divided into three stories; the first intended for the animals; in the second were to be laid up the necessary stores of provisions; the third was reserved for the birds, and also for the apartments of Noe and his three sons and their wives. There was a door in the first story, a large window in the third, and smaller windows to admit the light. Some think that the ark was four stories high. It is an error to suppose that an innumerable quantity of animals were introduced; for the species of animals known in the world can be reduced to one hundred and thirty. The ark is, as we have said, the symbol of Mary. Many Fathers also see in it a figure of the Church, out of which there is no salvation for man, just as those who were out of the ark could not escape the general deluge.

† De Dormit. Virg. n. 8.

‡ Jacob means "supplanter." The patriarch of that name was the son of Isaac and Rebecca. He left his father's house, alone, on foot, with a staff in his hand, and journeyed towards the abode of Laban, his uncle. Overtaken by night

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made for himself, and by whom the Lord rose from earth to heaven to descend again and converse with men. A Father whom we have already cited says, speaking of the symbol, that Mary is the means and ladder which God employed to descend on earth, where, assuming a mortal form, he became really man and united what sin had so fatally divided—the creature and the Creator.* And as angels descended that ladder to serve their God, so men by an angelic life should at last possess heaven.

The BURNING BUSH,† which Moses saw on Mount Horeb, wrapt in flames, yet contrary to the laws of nature not consumed, evidently designs the eminent prerogative of Mary, who became the mother of Jesus, without the least diminution of her virginal purity. "Was it not a great miracle,"

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on his way, he took a stone to support his head, and fell asleep. He saw in a dream the mysterious ladder, and heard the Almighty renew the promise to give the land to his posterity, which should be multiplied beyond all nations of the earth. Jacob on awaking poured oil upon the stone on which he had rested, and set it up as a monument to mark the spot where he had enjoyed the vision, promised the Lord the tithe of all he had, and named the spot Bethel, which means house of God (Genesis xxviii. 11, 12).

* Orat. I. in Nativitate B. M. V. n. 3.

† Moses after slaying an Egyptian, who had struck a Hebrew, fled from Pharaoh's court and retired to the land of Madian, where he married Sephora, daughter of the high-priest Jethro. About forty years after, as he was one day feeding his father-in-law's flocks, on Mount Horeb, the Lord appeared to him in the midst of a bush that was on fire, but did not burn away. Surprised at such a prodigy, Moses attempted to approach, but God having commanded him to loose the sandals from off his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, he immediately obeyed. The Almighty then told him that he had heard the cries of his people, and that he had come down to deliver them from the slavery of Egypt, and had chosen Moses to be the fulfiller of his will. Moses, to excuse himself, alleged his incapacity, and the difficulty of utterance which he labored under. God replied that he would be ever with him; that Aaron, his brother, would aid him, and that he should have the gift of miracles; which was verified by his rod changing into a serpent, and by the cure of the leprosy with which his hand was seized. (Exodus iii.–iv.)

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cries St. Gregory of Nyssa,* "to see a virgin become a mother without ceasing to be a virgin; virginity no obstacle to childbirth, and childbirth no detriment to virginity?" If the passage which the legislator of the Hebrews expresses in the words, "I will go and see this great sight," is to be understood of a passage from one time to another, and not from one place to another, all this prophecy, remarks the same Father, is completely verified in the Blessed Virgin, "who like the bush that burnt but was not consumed, gave to the earth Jesus Christ, the light of the world, preserving undimmed that purity to preserve which she would have foregone even the honour of being Mother of God." St. Bernard,† in regard to the same symbol, says: "And what can the burning yet unconsumed bush of Moses mean except Mary, who brought forth without experiencing the pains of travail? Therefore does the Church address to the Blessed Virgin this chant;

"In the bush which Moses saw unconsumed,
We recognize thy admirable virginity preserved.
Intercede for us, O Mother of God!"‡

AARON'S ROD§ was also a figure of Mary. God, to show this people of Israel him whom he had chosen to exercise the

* Orat. de Nativi. seu in diem natalem Domini.

† Hom. II. super Missus est, n. 5.

‡ Antiphon of the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

§ Those who, as we saw above, behold in Holy Writ the primitive element of mythology, find a striking resemblance between Aaron and Mercury. In fact the poets relate that Mercury was born in Egypt near the Nile, where he led a pastoral life, which induced him to be regarded as the deity of shepherds, travellers, and merchants. They gave him the titles of interpreter and messenger of the gods, and portray him holding a rod wound about with serpents, and performing miracles; they attribute to him an eminent degree of science and the power of revealing the future; they finally considered him as the god of roads, dwellings, thieves, musicians, and ascribed to him the invention of the lyre. All these circumstances have

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sacerdotal functions, ordered as many rods as there were tribes to be laid before the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle; each rod was to bear the name of the tribe to which it belonged, except that of Levi, on which Aaron's name was inscribed. When day came, Aaron's rod was found all blossoming, and at the same time loaded with the ripe fruit of

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their parallels in the life of Aaron. He was a shepherd; he exercised authority over the Israelites and was made God's interpreter to Pharaoh. His rod produced serpents. The lyre as well as other musical instruments and trumpets served the high-priests in the temple to accompany the ceremonies of worship. The Israelites who robbed the Egyptians as they left were headed by Aaron. The sacred text speaks of Aaron's eloquence, and eloquence was also a gift attributed to Mercury. The science and prophetic spirit of Mercury are emblems of the graces which God bestowed on the brother of Moses and then on his successors, by means of the Urim and Thummim, which among the Hebrews, were a ready means of knowing God's will.

The words *Urim* and *Thummim*, according to the literal meaning of the Hebrew, signify lights and perfection, or the brilliant and the perfect. St. Jerome translates them, by doctrine and truth; according to the Septuagint it is the declaration of truth or the manifestation of truth. Some authors maintain that Urim and Thummim are epithets of the precions stones in the rational; others believe that these two words are Egyptian and not Hebrew, and that their real signification is the declaration of the truth as the Seventy translate it. The author of the book of Ecclesiasticus (xiv. 12) expresses himself as if the manifestation was the attribute of the high-priest vested in the ephod. We read the same in the first book of Esdras (ii. 63). Josephus the Jewish historian, and many other ancient and modern writers, pretend that the Urim and Thummim were the extraordinary splendor with which the gems in the rational shone, whenever God chose to make known the success of the events as to which He was consulted, a splendor not visible when God disapproved of their enterprises. According to the historian Josephus, this kind of divine decree or oracle ceased one hundred and ten or one hundred and twelve years before Jesus Christ. Other interpreters think that the Urim and Thummim were an accessory of the rational, without being able to specify what it really was. All however agree on the following points: 1. This consultation of the Urim and Thummim was recurred to only in affairs of the utmost importance. 2d. The high-priest wearing the rational was the only minister of the ceremony. 3d. It was always made by the king, the president of the sanhedrim, the general of the army of Israel, or some other public person, and only for the general good of religion and the state. Archbishop Martini in the notes on Exodus xxviii.

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the almond tree amid its verdant leaves. God had so willed it, to show the selection which he had made of Aaron for the dignity of high-priest. Now this rod, which by a prodigy blossomed and bore fruit without being planted, and without having roots or fructifying sap, admirably symbolizes Mary, who, placed in the tabernacle, and being herself the living temple of the Holy Ghost, conceived without human intervention or any earthly assistance, and brought forth that blessed fruit, which gives and preserves to all men the spiritual life of the soul. "The Blessed Virgin," says St. Bernard,* "was prefigured by that rod, that blossom, without root or sap; for she became fruitful and bore Jesus, without the slightest diminution of her virginal purity, as Aaron's rod lost nothing of its verdancy by producing flowers and fruit."

THE FLEECE OF GIDEON† is a figure of Mary, or rather a

30, in his Italian version, thus speaks concerning the two words in question: "Ancient and modern interpreters generally agree that these words were written on the rational, although they do not agree as to the manner in which they were placed. St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. Cyril, and St. Jerome himself, maintain this sentiment, according to which these words signified: first, the qualities which the pontiff ought to possess, namely, truth, sanctity, purity of life, and the knowledge of divine things; secondly, the divine light, which illumined the pontiff, when he announced the truths and oracles of God. And in fact, when the Scripture says that God gave his answers and manifested his will to the Hebrews by means of the Urim and Thummim, this does not mean that God spoke to his pontiff by virtue of these words embroidered on the rational, but that the high-priest, arrayed in his pontifical robes and especially wearing the rational, on which these words were worked, received from God science and truth, that is to say, the understanding of the doubtful things on which the Lord was consulted." "I do not believe," adds Archbishop Martini, "that this opinion is exempt from all difficulty; but I can say that the same difficulties occur in any other, and I consider myself fortunate to be able to adhere to this. In such obscure and remote matters, if error is inevitable, it is a less evil to be deceived in company with the ancient doctors and masters."

* Serm. in Dom. infra octavam Assumptionis B. V. M.—Homil. II. super Missus est.

† Gideon was the son of Joas, of the tribe of Manasse, who dwelt in the town

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cluster of mysterious symbols. We read in the book of Judges, that Gideon having exposed during a serene night a sheep's fleece, found it on the following morning all covered with dew, while the ground around it remained dry, and that dew was so abundant, that by pressing the fleece it filled a vessel. On the following night he placed the fleece once more in the same spot, and in the morning found it dry amid a spot all wet with dew. By this sign it pleased the Almighty to assure Gideon, that Israel, under his guidance, should triumph over the enemies which had oppressed it for seven years. St. Bernard remarks in this matter that the fleece dripping with dew on a dry ground, denotes the Virgin who first received him who was to be spread over the whole world, that is, Jesus Christ and his grace. "Admire, O man," says he, "in this design of God the depth of his wisdom and the greatness of his mercy. Wishing to shower on earth the heavenly dew, he first saturated with it the whole fleece, to show that he would place in Mary all the price of man's redemption." * Mary, containing in herself the source of all grace, which is Jesus Christ, possessed more than all

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of Ephra. God called him by an extraordinary vocation to deliver the people of Israel from the oppression of the Madianites, to whom they had been subject for seven years; that is, from the time of the death of Barac and Deborah. The Lord was touched by the cries of his people, and after reproaching them by one of his prophets, he sent an angel to Gideon, who was threshing in his barn, to order him to rescue the Israelites from the sway of the Madianites. Gideon asked a sign by which he might know that all was not an illusion. The angel touched with a rod the flesh and bread which Gideon had offered him, and immediately there issued from the stone on which the offering lay, a fire which consumed all. Assured by this miracle, Gideon, during the ensuing night, cut down in obedience to God the grove and altar consecrated to Baal, and he was hence surnamed Jerobaal, that is to say, the enemy of Baal. Then began the exploits of this valiant champion whom the Holy Scripture so much extol. He governed the people of God for nine years, till his death A. M. 2768 (Judges vi. 37).

* Serm. in Dom. infra octavam Assumpt. Serm. in Nativ. B. V. M.

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other creatures together, and like a fountain which pours over the arid earth the abundance of its waters, does she communicate grace to all men. The holy doctor accordingly adds: "The fruit which thou hast borne is particularly thine, O Mary, although communicated by thee to us all: the dew fell at first on the fleece, and on another day only on the ground: but it did not fall entire on any part of the earth, while it fell entire on the fleece." St. Jerome * says that the shepherds warned by the angel, found the Lamb of God, the Lamb in the pure and spotless fleece, who, amid the universal dryness of the earth, was bathed in heavenly dew. And the Church, acknowledging in the dew-covered fleece a figure of the august mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word in Mary's womb, has placed these words in the office of the Blessed Virgin:

"When thou wast ineffably born of a Virgin,
Then were the Scriptures fulfilled,
Like rain upon the fleece didst thou descend." †

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE ‡ was the house of the Eternal; and

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* Epitaph Paulæ.

† Anthem in the Office of the Blessed Virgin.

‡ Solomon to rear this temple with unexampled magnificence, applied to Hyram, king of Tyre, for able workmen of every kind, and the most precious woods of Libanus. He erected it on the spot chosen by David for that purpose. The edifice was constructed on the model of the tabernacle, but on a more extensive plan and with immense riches. It consisted of a great number of streets and edifices arranged to receive the priests and all the people. It had three divisions: the first called the Court of the Gentiles, contained large galleries and corridors; the second was the Court of the Israelites, where the people entered, and around which extended magnificent galleries supported by two or three rows of pillars, and intended for the dwelling of the priests and Levites on duty, with chambers in which were laid up all that was necessary for the Divine worship. Amid the Court of the People was that of the sacrifice, square, and surrounded with galleries and buildings for the same purpose. Amid this last court was the part of the edifice properly

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Solomon accordingly built it with extraordinary magnificence, and lavished in profusion upon it gold, silver, and precious stones. On the day of its consecration, it was filled with the majesty of God, who gave by several miracles manifest signs of his Divine presence. According to the Holy Fathers and interpreters, this temple was the symbol of Mary; the large stones set in the foundation denoted the power of the Blessed Virgin, and the ornaments of the magnificent edifice designated the virtues of her, who was to become, by the intervention of the Holy Ghost, the worthy habitation of the Word. And, moreover, the Most High having covered her with the shadow of his power, she was filled with the majesty of God in far greater splendor than Solomon's temple had been. On this subject Arnold of Chartres says, speaking of Mary; "Behold the tabernacle of God which contains the Holy of Holies, the miraculous rod, figured by the tables of the Covenant, the altar of incense, the two cherubim who gaze on each other, the manna and the propitiatory uncovered and unveiled."* And as the temple was sacred precisely because it was the dwelling of God, the Church, in the praises which she addresses to Mary, gives her the titles of "Temple of the Lord," and "Sanctuary of the Holy Ghost."

The ARK OF THE COVENANT† perfectly symbolizes the

called the temple, and containing the holy of holies, the holy, and the vestibule. In the holy were placed the golden candlestick, the table of the loaves of proposition, and the golden altar on which incense was offered. The holy of holies contained only the Ark of the Covenant which contained the tables of the Law. The interior of the temple was adorned with all the splendor that art and refinement could combine. Gold glittered on every side, the tables, candlesticks, and countless vessels of every kind being made of that precious metal.

* De laudibus Virginis.

† It was a kind of box made of incorruptible wood, which Moses constructed by God's order at the foot of Mount Sinai, to hold the tables on which were written the words of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments of God. It was five

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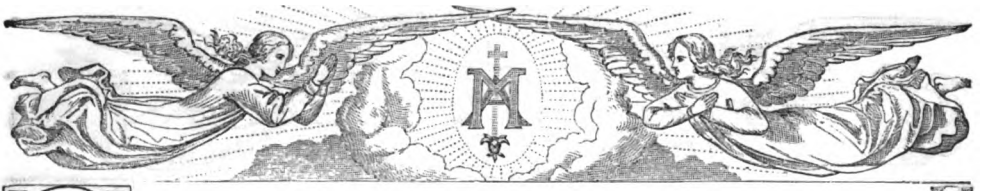
Blessed Virgin. In this propitious ark, preserved and venerated in the temple of Solomon, in this ark covered and lined with the purest gold, were enclosed the two tables of the Law which God had given to Moses on Mount Sinai; there too was kept a vase containing some of the manna which fell miraculously from heaven to feed the Hebrew people in the desert. What an admirable figure of Mary is the ark of the Covenant! A virgin adorned with every grace and all purity of soul and body, she held in her chaste womb the Eternal Word of the Father, the Divine Legislator of the law of grace, the author of the new covenant between God and man. She bore and gave to the world Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who is the true manna, the heavenly bread, the bread of life which came down from heaven, and of which the Gospel says that whoso eats thereof in the desert of terrestrial life, conquers unto himself the eternal and blessed life of heaven. For this reason the Church, invoking the Blessed Virgin, applies to her this name, "Ark of the Covenant"—"Fœderis arca."

In order not to run into prolixity in treating of symbols of the same nature, I shall confine myself to saying that Mary was announced to men in the cloud which Elias called to fertilize the long arid and thirsty earth; in the holy mountain, from which a rock was detached to overthrow the profane

palms long, and three high and broad. It was covered within and without with plates of gold. It was surmounted by the propitiatory, composed of a small crown of gold and two cherubim attached to the cover, who with their extended wings formed a kind of throne where the majesty of God reposed. On each side of the ark were two gold rings through which were passed the bars used in transporting it from place to place. None but the Levites consecrated to the service of God could approach and bear it. After the conquest of the land of Canaan, the Ark of the Covenant was deposited in the tabernacle erected at Silo. Transferred then to various places, it was finally placed in the temple of Solomon, and adorned with palms in relievo, with golden cherubim, and other ornaments of exquisite finish.



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idols; in the closed gate which the venomous serpent could not enter; in the sealed fountain whose waters receive nothing impure; in the embalmed Rose of Jericho, surrounded by thorns which kept off every profane hand; in the ever incorruptible Cedar of Libanus; in the Cypress of Sion whose summit rose like a tower towards heaven; in the Palm-tree of Cades, ever rich with new fruit.

And I will, in closing, recall the fact that other striking symbols of the Blessed Virgin are to be found in the Canticle of Canticles,* where a woman far superior to the Sunamitess is the object of the sublime thoughts of the inspired poet. We have others as beautiful in the book of Wisdom, where this virtue is described in a special manner, under various em-

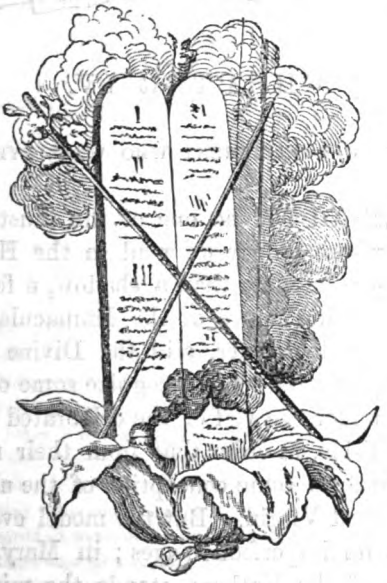


* The Canticle of Canticles, so called on account of its superiority to all others, is an epithalamium composed by Solomon on his marriage with the daughter of the King of Egypt, who had renounced her idolatry to adore the true God. This alliance of the wisest of kings may be applied to the Blessed Virgin, and besides it prefigures admirably the spiritual union of the Son of God with his Church. Most interpreters divide the Canticle of Canticles into seven eclogues, which correspond, according to some, to the seven days, during which the ancients prolonged the nuptial solemnities. Nothing can be more sublime or eloquent than this divinely inspired poesy, when we consider the conditions of this kind of composition. In ease, elegance, simplicity, delicacy, it is ravishing. Its varied imagery and style, the tenderness of expression, the ardor of passion, are the principal characteristics of this celebrated chant, in which a thousand other beauties shine forth. The Jews regarding this book as beyond ordinary comprehension, permitted no man to read it before attaining the age of maturity, that is, the age of thirty years. The holy Fathers were not less reserved in putting it in the hands of the faithful; they wished them first, by age and by the exercise of virtue and prayer, to acquire the spirit necessary to unravel its meaning without any danger from the form. Monseignore Guiseppe Maria Ercolani, a pious and celebrated prelate, well known in the literary world by the name of Neralco, wrote a charming allegory *Maria*, based on this canticle, interpreting it in honor of the Blessed Virgin, whose mystic marriage and triumph in heaven are there symbolized. This work, remarkable for poetic talent, and still more so for its judicious notes, has enjoyed great success, and been frequently printed.



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blems, which according to the Holy Fathers and interpreters, apply to Mary, so closely united to Jesus Christ, Wisdom itself. Hence on almost all feasts of the Blessed Virgin, the Church in the office and in the mass applies to her passages of Scripture referring to the Divine Wisdom.







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CHAPTER IV.

WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WHO WERE TYPES OF MARY.

ALTHOUGH no one of the illustrious heroines whose eulogy we read in the Holy Scriptures can be more than a shadow, a feeble image, a passing figure of the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer, still the Divine clemency has permitted us to recognize some of her features under the veil of the celebrated women of the Bible, in order that from their relative greatness men might form some conception of the absolute greatness of the Blessed Virgin. But the model ever incomparably transcends its imperfect images; in Mary, according to the expression of the Fathers, stands the miracle of God's omnipotence. To form a just idea of the excellency of the Mother of the Saviour and of her preëminence over all women, who are a figure of her, we must then argue not only from what is particular to what is general; but what is more, from the low and limited to the great, the sublime, the all but



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infinite. This understood, let us see how all these great qualities, which drew on the illustrious women of the Old Law the admiration of the age in which they lived, are found in a still more eminent degree in the Virgin of Nazareth.

The first image of the Holy Mother of God was Sarah.* She had passed the years in which maternity is possible, when, conformably to the promise which God had made her, she became fruitful by a prodigy, and with unspeakable joy gave birth to a son, Isaac. Mary was fructified by the superhuman operation of the Holy Ghost; she became a mother without ceasing to be a virgin; she gave birth to the Messiah promised to the world and desired by the nations, of whom Isaac was himself an expressive symbol. She brought him forth not only with unspeakable joy for herself, but also for the happiness and consolation of all men whom he was to set free, and whom he in fact delivered from the bondage of Satan. Hence we call the Blessed Virgin "cause of our joy," as the Church teaches.

Rachel was also an image of Mary. Rachel,† whom the

* Sarah (princess), called originally Saraï (my princess), Abraham's wife, was born A. M. 2018, and was the daughter of Aram, Abraham's brother. She was not, however, grand-daughter of Abraham's mother, inasmuch as her father, Aram, the son of Tharé, was born of another mother. Abraham did not lie when he called her his sister, that is to say, his niece, according to the usage of the Hebrew language. (See St. Augustine contra Faust, lib. xxii.) She followed her husband when he left his country, and went with him to the land of Canaan. A famine drove them into Egypt, where her husband passed her for his sister and not for his wife, for fear that the Egyptians might kill him to carry off Sarah, who was very beautiful. In this way he preserved his life and saved his wife's honor without committing a lie. Pharaoh, who took her from Abraham and conducted her to his palace, was punished by God, and restored her, giving them both an escort to the frontiers of his kingdom. All know how Abraham invited three angels to enter his tent, and how in return for his hospitality they announced to him that he should have a son by the aged Sarah, and how she, on hearing their prophecy, could not withhold laughing it to scorn.

† Rachel, whose name signifies sheep, was the daughter of Laban and a sister



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sacred text depicts as a woman of rare beauty, was the daughter of Laban. Jacob, as soon as he saw her, loved her with a tender affection; he loved her with boundless constancy, and endured a long and painful servitude in order to obtain her as his spouse, and always showed her a marked preference over his other wives. The beauty with which Rachel was gifted far beyond her sister Lia, was an eloquent image of the unspeakable beauty of Mary's great soul, more precious and noble than Rachel's, as the soul is more noble and precious than the body. It is on account of this inaccessible spiritual beauty of the Blessed Virgin that the Church justly applies to her the words of the Canticle, where she is called, "Thou art all fair, Oh my love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. IV. 7). She was in fact loved by God and preferred by him to all other creatures, as Jacob preferred Rachel to all other women. And because Mary was the most amiable and beloved of all creatures, and the object of God's predilection, the angel, on asking her consent to the incarnation of the Word in her chaste womb, saluted her as "Mary full of grace."

Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron,* received of God the spirit of prophecy, and must have lived, according to the Holy Fathers, in a state of virginity; she led the women of Israel through the Red Sea, and first intoned the Canticle of thanksgiving: "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified; the horse and the rider he hath thrown into the

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of Lia. Jacob arrived in Mesopotamia, near the city of Carra, received from her hands water to quench his thirst and refresh his camels. Sometimes the Scripture employs the word Rachel to designate the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, sprung from Joseph, son of Jacob and Rachel.

* Mary (bitterness of the sea), daughter of Amram and Jocabet, was born about the year 2424 (A. M.), that is to say, ten or twelve years before Moses. After the passage of the Red Sea, and the entire destruction of Pharaoh's army, she entoned at the head of the Israelite women the celebrated canticle, "Let us sing to the Lord," &c., while Moses did the same at the head of the men.

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sea," as described in Exodus. She is a striking image of the Blessed Virgin both in the spirit of prophecy, and in the state of virginity, and in zeal to chant the praises of the Lord. In fact, Mary, enriched with the spirit of prophecy, ever pure and spotless in her virginal innocence, faithful guide and queen of all virgins, celebrated first of all the solemn canticle of a better redemption, in which she took so great a part as mother of a God made man. According to St Ambrose and St Peter Chrysologus, Mary by her inspired canticle: "My soul doth glorify the Lord,"* was the first to render thanks to God, who, by means of the unspeakable incarnation of the Divine Word in her virginal womb, had vouchsafed to deliver the human race from the bondage of the devil, in which man had unhappily fallen by Adam's sin.

The holy mother of the Man-God Redeemer is also figured in Debbora and Jahel,† those two illustrious women who achieved the defeat and death of Sisara, and thereby effected the deliverance of the people of Israel, whose enemy and oppressor he was. Debbora, enlightened by the divine spirit,

* St. Basil, or the author, whoever he was, of the Commentary on Isaias speaks thus: "No one can deny that the Virgin was the prophetess whom Isaias approached in spirit, if he remembers the Magnificat; every word of that divine canticle, reveals in Mary the prophetess on whom the Holy Ghost descended and the power of the Most High overshadowed."

† Debbora (Bee), prophetess, spouse of Lapidoth and judge of Israel, dwelt under a palm tree between Rama and Bethel. She sent for Barac, son of Abinoem, and in the name of God ordered him to raise ten thousand men and lead the army to Thabor, promising him victory over Sisara, general of Jabin's army. Barac refused to march against the enemy unless Debbora marched with him. The prophetess consented, and after overcoming Sisara, chanted a glorious canticle to thank God for the victory (A. M. 2719), Judges iv. 4.

Jahel (who rises), was a Jewess and wife of Hener. Sisara, general of tne armies of Canaan, retired to her tent. Inspired by God, Jahel, with more than manly courage, with a single blow of a hammer drove a nail into his temple, and Sisara passed from sleep to death. (Judges iv. 17.)

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governed the people and administered justice. Encouraging Barac to march against Sisara, she foretold him victory, and at the same time told him that the death of that hostile general was to be reserved for a woman's hand. This woman was Jahel, who received Sisara into her tent as he fled from Barac on Mount Thabor, and then slew him by nailing his head to the ground with a single stroke of the hammer. Hence in the Holy Scriptures Debbora is called "Mother of Israel," on account of the authority which her predictions gave her over the people, and the love the nation bore her. Jahel is proclaimed "blessed among women," because she slew Sisara, and thus delivered Israel from the oppression under which it groaned. These two heroines prefigure Mary in the victory which the Immaculate Virgin gained over the enemy of the human race, as being the mother of Jesus Christ, sole conqueror of the powers of hell; and if Debbora was called the "mother of Israel," and Jahel "blessed among women," under these titles too they prefigure the Divine mother, the mother of the true faithful, truly blessed among all women by having brought forth to earth the Son of God.

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and especially St. Ambrose, St. Bonaventure, and St. Bernard, see in the wise and prudent Abigail,* a beautiful image of Mary. We cannot do better than cite the very words of the seraphic

* Abigail (joy of the father), was the wife of Nabal, a very rich and avaricious man. He was of the tribe of Judah (there was another Nabal of the tribe of Issachar), and dwelt on Mount Carmel. David, provoked against Nabal for refusing him hospitality in a pressing need, resolved to exterminate him and his. Abigail foreseeing the peril, repaired to the prince with presents. David, touched with Abigail's virtue, not only pardoned Nabal, but after his death, married the generous widow. The Fathers, besides seeing in Abigail an image of Mary, who appeased God provoked against sinners, find in her conduct the example to be followed by women, who, like Abigail, have the misfortune to be united to men like Nabal.

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Doctor, St. Bonaventure :* King David, full of fury and indignation, thirsting for vengeance on the mad Nabal, was met by the wise Abigail, who spoke so wisely that she calmed David, and made him exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech, and blessed be thou who hast kept me to-day from coming to blood." In the foolish Nabal, adds St. Bonaventure, is represented the sinner whom the Holy Ghost calls mad, saying, "The number of fools is infinite." The Lord, provoked at the sinner, is figured in David irritated against Nabal, and Abigail is the image of the Blessed Virgin, who appeases the divine anger, and obtains by her prayers and merits the pardon of the sinner. Hence we with good right invoke her under the consoling title of "Refuge of sinners."

Mary is also figured in Anna, the mother of Samuel, who by vows and prayers at last became a mother, and to accomplish her promises, almost as soon as her son was weaned, bore him to the temple and consecrated him to God : in whose service he afterwards became High Priest. Anna represents Mary, who by her prayers and virtues merited to conceive in her chaste womb the Eternal Word of the Father, the Messias, object of the prayers, sighs and vows of all the just of the Old Law, who was the anointed of the Lord, and the Eternal priest. Besides, Anna, become fruitful and a mother after so long a sterility, is the image of Mary supernaturally fruitful, mother and virgin by an unheard of prodigy. Finally, Anna, by chanting her beautiful canticle of joy and praise, which, according to St. Augustine,† is in part a hymn of gratitude,

* St. Bonaventura, Speculum B. M. V. 14.

† De Civitate Dei, xvii. 4.—St. Chrysostom in his third homily, speaks thus of Anna : "*I am full of joy not only because I am delivered* (from the shame of barrenness), *but because I am saved by thee.*" Holy souls rejoice in God the giver, not in God's gift. Good servants prefer the master to all his property. If we have com-



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and in part a prophecy, symbolizes the humble virgin of Nazareth, who, full of gratitude, referred her joy to God in her canticle, and recounted the benefits which she had received from him. And in fact, in the spirit of humility as well as in gratitude referring all the glory to God, the canticles of Anna and Mary completely agree.

The beautiful and victorious Judith * also figures most clearly the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to the expression of Holy Writ, "God increased her beauty so that she appeared to all men's eyes incomparably lovely,"† in order that Holophernes, ravished with admiration merely on beholding her and hearing her voice, should exclaim: "There is not such another woman upon earth in look, in beauty, and in sense of words."‡ By these prerogatives Judith had free access to the Assyrian camp, to cut off the head of Holophernes, deliver the city of Bethulia from siege, and the people of Israel from the fury of Nabuchodonosor. Hence all blessed her at her return, saying: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people . . . . the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed forever."§ Judith's exterior

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mitted sin, let us grieve for it, not for the punishment which we have deserved, but on account of the pain we have given to God; and if we do any thing good, let our joy arise not from the hope of reward, but from the pleasure given to the King of Heaven. In the eyes of the truly wise, the offence done to God is more terrible than hell; the pleasure given to God more desirable than the greatest kingdom."

* Judith (she who praises God), was of the tribe of Simeon, daughter of Merari and widow of Manasses. It is difficult to fix precisely the time of the deliverance of Bethulia by the death of Holophernes. It seems most probable that it occurred before the Babylonian captivity, and in the time of Manasses, king of Judah, about A. M. 3348. Then Arphaxad, king of the Medes, will be Dejoces or Phraortes his son, and Nabuchodonosor will be the same monarch whom profane historians style Saosduchin, son of Asarhaddon, and grandson of Sennacherib.

† Judith x. 4. ‡ Judith xi. 19. § Judith xv. 10.

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beauty, remarks St. Bonaventure,* represents well the interior beauty of Our Immaculate Lady. In fact, he says, there never has been, there is not, nor ever will be on earth, a woman to equal Mary in the glory of her life, the beauty of her soul, in the wisdom of the words which fell from her eloquent lips. By the splendor of all virtues, Mary pleased God in the highest degree, and was chosen to be the Mother of our Lord. At the words of the Archangel Gabriel, the divine messenger, she conceived Jesus by a miracle of grace, and thus crushed, when he least expected it, the head of the devil, figured by the serpent, whose haughty head she was, according to the divine promise, to crush, by delivering the human race from the impious bondage of that enemy of God. Mary was next called by the angel Blessed among women. Her cousin Elizabeth called her blessed, and she herself, in her celebrated Canticle, says that all generations shall proclaim her blessed, because the Lord wrought great things in her. The Church, in order to bless her, praise her, exalt her as her own glory, as the joy of all the faithful, as the honor of the Christian people, applies to Mary all that the Israelites chanted to Judith, and calls her justly "The glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honor of our people."

Among the illustrious women of the ancient covenant, to whom was given the honor of prefiguring the august queen of heaven, is also reckoned Esther.† She is represented in

* Specul. lect. vi.

† Esther, called also Edissa (the hidden), of the tribe of Benjamin, was the daughter of Abihail, and niece of Mardochai, by whom she was brought up. Assuerus, king of Persia, having repudiated his queen Vashti, sought as a spouse the most beautiful of the beauties of his kingdom. Esther was chosen. Assuerus had a favorite named Aman. The latter enraged at Mardochai, who refused to kneel before him, resolved to revenge himself on all the Jews. He obtained of the king an order to destroy them all at an appointed time. Mardochai informed Esther of the danger which menaced her nation, and the need it had of her inter-

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Holy Scripture as the paragon of the beauties of her time, and as rich in the abundance of all the gifts of soul. She conciliated the esteem, good graces, and love of King Assuerus, who proclaimed her queen, espoused her, and crowned her with the royal diadem. Touched with pity for her people, who had been condemned to die by the intrigue of Aman, Esther presented herself before the King her husband, imploring mercy for the Jewish people.

Assuerus saw, by the sincere words of Esther, the snare which the proud and unjust minister had laid to destroy Mardochai and the people of Juda, and in the edict of deliverance, it was ordered that Aman should die on the gibbet which he had destined for Mardochai. Our beautiful and heavenly queen Mary does not act differently from Esther. "The Blessed Virgin,"—it is St. Bonaventure who speaks,—"the Blessed Virgin, by her eminent virtues, found grace before God, as the Archangel assured her, when he announced the adorable mystery of the Incarnation. Not only did she merit to obtain from the Eternal King the royal crown of glory, and to be called Queen of heaven and earth, but she also asked through Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb, and obtained of God the salvation of the human race, justly con-

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cession as queen. Esther prepared by fasting and prayer to aid her people. Adorned with royal vestments, she appeared before the prince, and invited him to come with Aman and dine with her. Assuerus came; and during the banquet, Esther revealed that she was a Jewess, and implored justice against Aman, who had conspired the destruction of the Jewish nation. The king hung Aman on the very gibbet which that unworthy favorite had prepared for Mardochai; he revoked the edict published against the Jews, and permitted them to take vengeance on their enemies, on the very day which Aman had chosen for their slaughter. Historians do not agree as to the period of this event, nor as to the King of Persia whom the Scripture calls Assuerus; nevertheless, the circumstances related in the Book of Esther seem to apply to Darius, son of Hystaspes; and her marriage, probably, took place about the year 3489, almost at the period of the dedication of the temple. See Haydock's Bible.

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demned to eternal death, on account of original sin, and at the same time she caused the shame and overthrow of the real Aman, the devil, that jealous and perfidious enemy of man." The seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure, borrowing the words of St. Anselm, proceeds thus: "How can I sufficiently testify my gratitude to the mother of my God and Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose fruitfulness has rescued me from the severest bondage, whose delivery has freed me from eternal death, and whose divine fruit has restored me what I had lost, and brought me back from exile to my native land, from extreme misery to eternal felicity?" *

These heroines of the ancient law have hitherto been and ever will be most illustrious, both by what they accomplished, and by the virtues and prerogatives in which they showed themselves rich and adorned; but what are they but shadows, feeble images of that sublime and invincible heroine who unites in herself all the gifts of woman and angel, of that creature whom God himself chose from all eternity as a daughter, mother and spouse? What images then shall we choose to convey an adequate idea of her? A celebrated painter of antiquity, finding none to correspond to his ideal of grace, collected a thousand lines and features of beauty in the fairest women of Greece, and by blending them all in one harmonious whole, composed and formed a face of marvellous beauty. We may do the same to form some idea of our Blessed and Immaculate Mother; for the Blessed Virgin unites in her person and retraces in the most sovereign degree all that is beautiful and sublime in each of the illustrious heroines of the Old Testament; nay more, transcends this glorious group in the rarest attributes of each.

In speaking of Mary, we can find no creature worthy of

* Specul. lect. v. in fine.

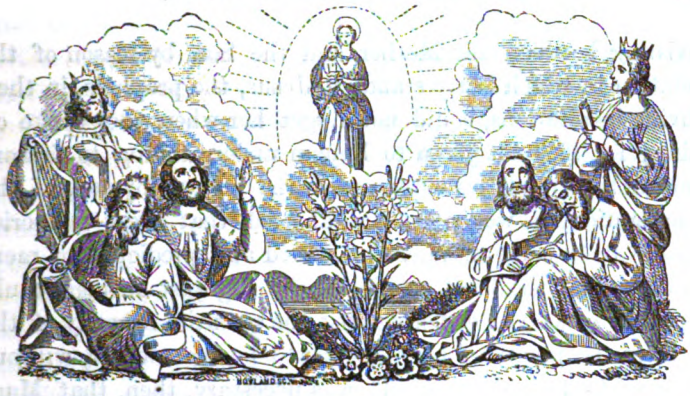
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being compared to her, inasmuch as she rises eminently above all creatures in heaven and on earth; hence the seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure, well exclaims: "O Mary, thou surpassest all women in beauty of form, thou surpassest the angels in excellence of sanctity." *

* Psalm iii. verse 2 of the Psalter which St. Bonaventure composed in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "Universas enim fœminas vincis pulchritudine carnis, superas angelos excellentia sanctitatis."



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CHAPTER V.

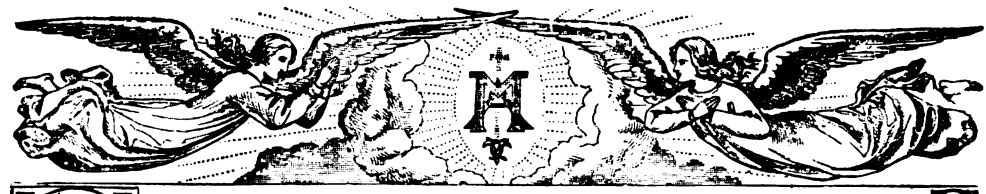
PROPHECIES WHICH RELATE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

MARY, whose soul had been enriched with all the treasures of divine grace; Mary, who had been solemnly promised to men in the earthly paradise, and had consequently been impatiently awaited by them; Mary, who, as we have seen, was prefigured by so many invincible heroines, could not be passed over in silence by the divine oracles: for the prophecies, an emanation of the attributes of the divinity, to whom alone is reserved a knowledge of the future, are, without comparison, more splendid and luminous than types and figures.

St. Cyprian* says, that it is a tradition taught in the synagogue, and acknowledged by the Church as true, that all the prophets, without a single exception, predicted only of the time of the Messias. By reason, then, of the close connection

* St. Cyprian, *De Vanitate idolorum.*

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existing between the Mother and the Son, by reason of the relation in which Mary stands to Jesus, the prophets, in their divine inspirations, could not forget her when they spoke of him; for it is not given to human understanding to fathom the sublime prodigies embraced in the august mystery of the Incarnation, it was necessary, at least, that these mysteries should be in some manner announced and predicted to men, in order that the least suspicion, the slightest outrage, could never be conceived either against the essential sanctity of the Son, or the purity of her who was to be his mother, without ceasing to be a Virgin. It was necessary, then, that Mary should be predicted as an incomparable creature, with her eminent greatness, her immaculate purity, her miraculous fruitfulness, her sublime] ow r, and all the singular advantages with which the Divine Hand was to enrich her. This we shall easily prove, in speaking of the prophecies which relate to our dear and blessed Mother.

The first who announced our glorious Lady, was her royal ancestor the prophet David, when to the sweet strains of his inspired harp he sang: "The earth hath yielded her fruit," * which according to St. Jerome's explanation signifies: "Mary, who is also our earth, because on our side she is the daughter of Adam, and formed consequently of the same clay as we, has yielded from her chaste and virginal womb the divine fruit, that fruit of immortality, with which, too, we were to nourish ourselves in the sacrament of the Eucharist." †

The same royal prophet also predicts Mary, when it was given him to see in the future his Christ issuing victorious from her womb, and when he sings: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place, thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified," ‡

* Ps. lxvi. 7. † In Comment. ad Cap. VII. Isaiæ v. 14.
‡ Ps. cxxxi. 8.



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and he also alluded to Mary, when he said: "God is our king before ages: he hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth;" * words which St. Bernard thus explains: "The womb of Mary is called with admirable propriety 'the midst of the earth,' since those who dwell in heaven, and those who are beneath the earth; those who lived before us, and we who are now alive; those who come after us, and all their posterity, all turn their eyes to Mary as the centre, as towards the ark of God, as towards the reason of all things, as towards the hope of all ages. The inhabitants of heaven admire her to rejoice and be consoled: those who are under the earth, by which I mean those in limbo and in Abraham's bosom, to be delivered: those who went before us to be found faithful and true in their prophecies: those who followed them to be glorified. O mother of God, sovereign of the world, queen of heaven, all generations shall call thee blessed, because thou hast given to all life and glory. In thee, O Mary, the angels find joy, the just grace, and sinners pardon; and well do all creatures turn their eyes to thee, because in thee, and by thee, that is to say, by thy divine Son, the merciful hand of the Almighty has created in a new and spiritual manner, all that he created in the beginning." †

This prophecy of David concerning Mary is echoed by his son, Solomon, when he says: "Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars." ‡ The prophet, according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers, understands that the wisdom of God, the coëternal Word of the Father, the virtue of God, Jesus Christ who is God, made

* Ps. lxxiii. 12. † Serm. II. in fest Pentec. n. 4.

‡ St. Athanasius, *Disp. contra Arium.*—St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, v. 20. St. Ignatius Martyr, *Epist. ad Philipp.*—St. Jerome, *in Cap. VII. Isaiæ.*—St. Epiphanius, *Hæres* lxxiii.—St. Andrew of Crete, *Orat. in Salut. Angel.*—St. Bonaventure, *in Spec.* lect. vi

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himself an abode in the womb of Mary, where, on proceeding from the bosom of the Father, he assumed the human form. The womb of Mary is then the house, the temple of the Word made flesh. The fulness of the Divinity dwells in that temple, where he hath hewn out seven pillars to support and adorn it; that is, which he hath enriched with the theological and cardinal virtues; or rather, as St. Bonaventure says, he infused into the soul of Mary the seven graces of the Holy Ghost, in order to render it, by faith and works, an abode worthy of the divinity." *

According to the opinion of St. Bernard and other Fathers,† Solomon also prophesied of Mary, when seized with admiration he exclaimed: "Who shall find a valiant woman? far and from the uttermost coasts, is the price of her."‡

Now what creature was ever more valiant than Mary? She was so valiant that, according to the divine promise, she crushed the head of the infernal serpent who impelled the first man to evil.

The whole Canticle of Canticles§ may be considered as

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* St. Bonaventure, *ut supra*..

† St. Bernard, *Serm.* 72 *de Div.* St. Augustine, *Serm.* 56 *et* 58 *de Div.* St. Epiphanius, *ut supra.* St. Gregory, mxxiii. Mor. Catena Patrum Græc.

‡ Proverbs xxxi. 10.

§ I shall, I think, please the learned reader by relating here how Monsignore Joseph de Senegallia, better known by the pseudonyme of "Neral Castrimeniano," has employed the Canticle of Canticles in a sacred poem, entitled "The Sunamitess;" this poem, written with charming grace, is an allegory on the Blessed Virgin. The illustrious author first explains the subject of the Canticle, according to the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, a d after relating how Solomon, enamored of the beauty of the Sunamitess, chose her as his spouse and crowned her Queen of Palestine; how the Jews were jealous to see a foreigner raised to so high a rank, and how to escape the wrath of her enemies the young Sunamitess, after the royal nuptials, left the court and city of Jerusalem, with Solomon's consent, to become a shepherdess, till her virtue was acknowledged, and she recalled by the people and proclaimed queen amid the universal applause. Monsignore de

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a prophecy relative to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Creator's daughter of predilection. In fact, the Holy Fathers say that, in the Canticle of Canticles, Solomon predicts the Blessed Virgin, under various figurative expressions, some of which we shall select. First, with St. Jerome and St. Bernard,* we find her predicted under the pleasing image of a land where the flowers of the fields and the lily of the valleys bud forth. Now the earth of the fields differs from a garden, in its producing flowers spontaneously without man's sowing or cultivating them; so by a miracle of grace, and without man's intervention, the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary produces the ever-verdant flower, which is Jesus Christ. We contemplate Mary, in that garden enclosed on every side, where the rarest and most charming flowers are planted, of every hue and every odor, and where the ancient serpent cannot glide in nor distil his venom. She appears to us under the figure of a lily amid thorns, showing herself such by her spotless purity, candid like the lily, like it fragrant in the odor of every virtue, intact amid the thorns which protect

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Senegallia proceeds thus: "This fact, with others drawn from the sacred text, is the subject of this poem, where the Sunamitess represents the Virgin chosen by God among all creatures, to be the Mother of the Word and the Queen of the Universe. It is under the veil of allegory, the war which the rebel angels, on this occasion enkindled in heaven; it is the most pure conception of the Virgin and her birth on earth, where she practised all the most sublime virtues, especially humility and resignation to the divine will, so that at the close of her mortal career she was called by her Son to glory, and raised above all the heavenly spirits. Let the reader then keep the Blessed Virgin ever before his eyes, because she alone is the real subject of this poem; the Sunamitess, who triumphs in Jerusalem, is no other than the Virgin exalted and crowned in heaven!" The learned and pious author, at the close of his sacred poem, adds an explanation from the Canticle of Canticles, and justifies by texts from the Holy Fathers and Doctors all that he applies to the Blessed Virgin in the allegory. The edition of the work published by Rossi, at Rome, in 1739, is adorned with highly esteemed engravings.

* St. Bernard, *De Adv. Dom.*, Serm. II.—St. Jerome, *ut supra*.



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it, because she was to be, by an extraordinary miracle, at once virgin and mother. Finally, with St. John Damascenus,* we behold her predicted under the figure of a sealed fountain, giving rise to a pure and limpid stream, that is, to the course of the life of Jesus, without breaking the seal of her Virginity.

Mary, the ornament of the world by her virtues, is predicted not only in this beautiful one of Solomon, in whom there never was the shadow of a fault, but also in the early dawn, in the silent beauty of the moon, in the dazzling splendor of the sun, in the woman who advances so terrible at the head of an army ranged in battle array. And if Mary, as St. Bonaventure says, is like the Aurora,† how has she not scattered the dark night of sin? Hallowed in her mother's womb, she was nurtured in the light of grace, and brought forth the Eternal Sun of Justice, who inundated her with his splendor before he was seen on earth. And if she is like the silver moon, when that planet is in its fulness, how could Mary be aught but all beautiful, since she is fully illuminated by the Eternal Sun of Wisdom and Truth, which is God, whose effulgence she reflects on the whole universe? And if it shines after the likeness of the sun, which alone of all creatures can strikingly represent the Eternal Sun of Justice, what is this but to say, that as the sun by its light surpasses all the other orbs of light, so Mary shines with a greater glory than all the other Saints in heaven, those luminous stars that surround and adorn the throne of God? Is she not as terrible as an army ranged in battle array, she who overcame the proud enemy of the human race, and who alone has destroyed all the monsters of heresy which have appeared in the world, as the Church chants in her honor?

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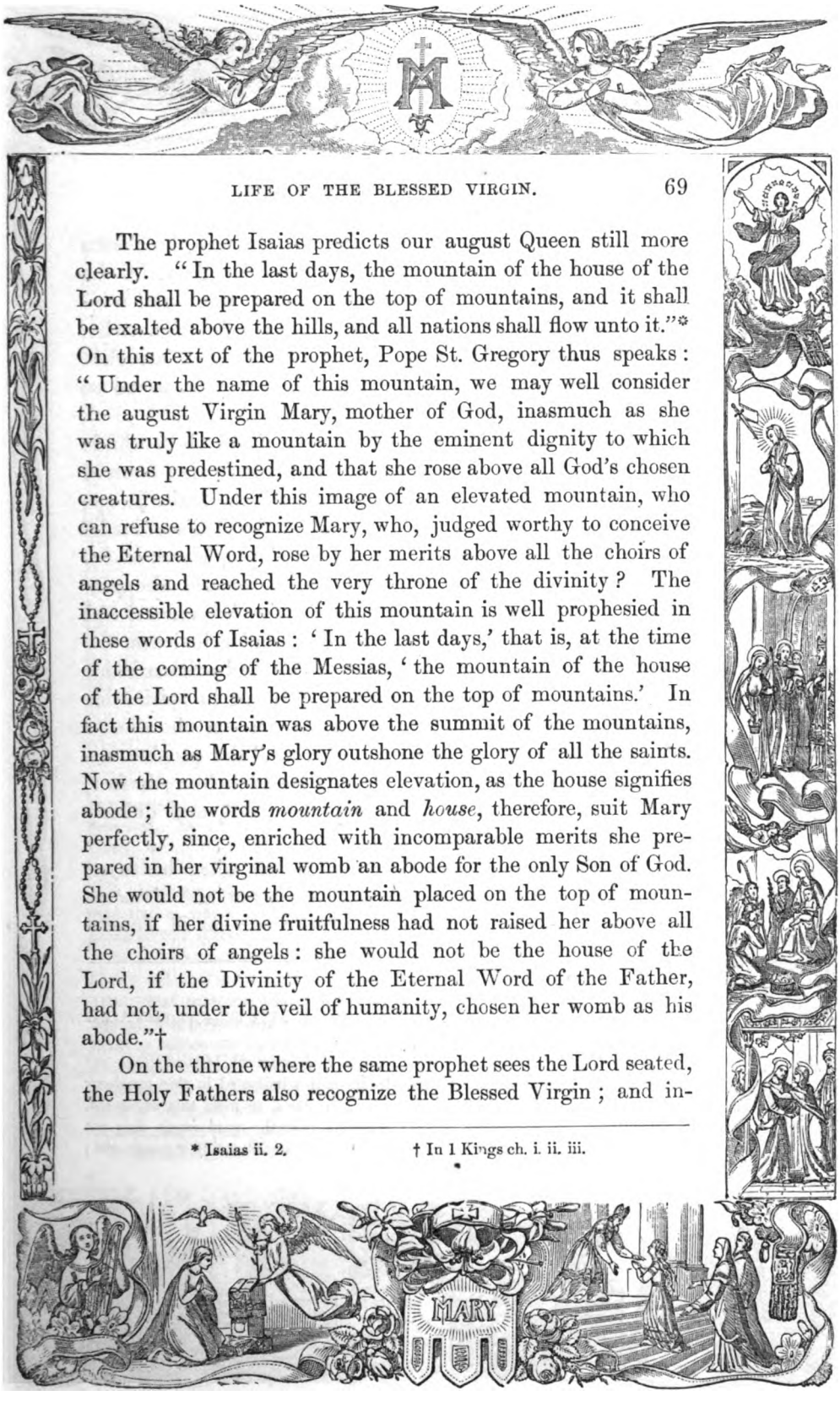
* *De Dormit. Virg.* Orat. II. † In Spec. lect. 7 et lect. 11.

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The prophet Isaias predicts our august Queen still more clearly. "In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."* On this text of the prophet, Pope St. Gregory thus speaks: "Under the name of this mountain, we may well consider the august Virgin Mary, mother of God, inasmuch as she was truly like a mountain by the eminent dignity to which she was predestined, and that she rose above all God's chosen creatures. Under this image of an elevated mountain, who can refuse to recognize Mary, who, judged worthy to conceive the Eternal Word, rose by her merits above all the choirs of angels and reached the very throne of the divinity? The inaccessible elevation of this mountain is well prophesied in these words of Isaias: 'In the last days,' that is, at the time of the coming of the Messias, 'the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains.' In fact this mountain was above the summit of the mountains, inasmuch as Mary's glory outshone the glory of all the saints. Now the mountain designates elevation, as the house signifies abode; the words *mountain* and *house*, therefore, suit Mary perfectly, since, enriched with incomparable merits she prepared in her virginal womb an abode for the only Son of God. She would not be the mountain placed on the top of mountains, if her divine fruitfulness had not raised her above all the choirs of angels: she would not be the house of the Lord, if the Divinity of the Eternal Word of the Father, had not, under the veil of humanity, chosen her womb as his abode."†

On the throne where the same prophet sees the Lord seated, the Holy Fathers also recognize the Blessed Virgin; and in-

* Isaias ii. 2. † In 1 Kings ch. i. ii. iii.



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deed the Son of God descended from heaven into the chaste womb of Mary, as into his own sanctuary; for Mary, by the singular graces with which she was endowed, was found worthy to give him both her flesh and her blood. Hence St. John Damascenus, addressing Mary, says: "Thou art that royal throne which angels surround with respect, to adore their Creator and King abiding there."*

According to the Fathers,† the very virgin whose childbearing the prophet announces, that is Mary, is also foretold under the image of that prophetess whom Isaias‡ approached to understand the words which by God's order he had written in his book. The name of prophetess, as St. Basil remarks, suits her perfectly, both because she prophesied truly in her celebrated Canticle, the Magnificat, and because Isaias approached her by God's order to learn the signification of the words which he himself had written in his book by God's dictation. Now on beholding in spirit this virgin prophetess become fruitful and bear a son who was to be called "Hasten to take away the spoils," the prophet understood the mystery which God had dictated to him; in fact, Christ, born of a Virgin, overcame the devil, and quickly despoiled him of all his conquests.

Isaias§ still more clearly predicts her when he says: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."‖ In these words, as St. Jerome

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* Orat. I. *de Dorm. Virg.*

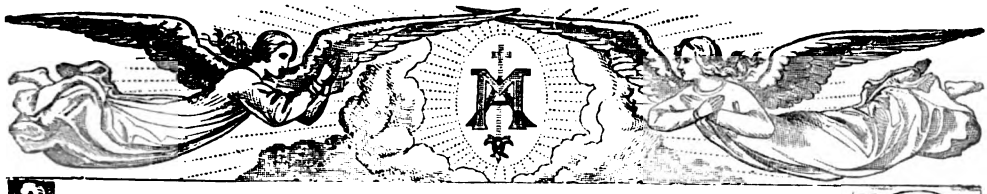
† Tertullian, xviii.—Eusebius, Demonst. Evangel. VII. iii.—Cyrillus Alex. *Orat. in Pasch.*—Gregory Nazianzen, in loc. hunc, &c.

‡ Isaias viii. 3.

§ Isaias vii. 14.

‖ In Cap. vii. Isaiæ ch. ii. All the circumstances indicated in this prophecy are fully realized in Jesus, the Son of Mary. The Jews, to meet this argument, which proves the coming of the Messias, maintain that the word *virgin* does not entirely correspond to the Hebrew word *halma*, which signifies only a young girl;

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well observes, we must not understand merely a virgin who preserved her virginity till marriage, but a virgin remaining such after childbirth, a unique virgin, the Virgin by excellence. All these things are verified solely in the Blessed Virgin Mary, as she alone conceived without losing any thing of her purity, and bore a son, who being the Word made flesh, dwelling among men, was the true Emmanuel. Hence St. Matthew, after relating the admirable conception of the Son of God, by the operation of the Holy Ghost in the chaste womb of Mary, concludes thus: "Now, all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which the Lord spoke by the prophet saying: Behold a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."*

Can we but understand as said of Mary, what the same prophet writes in another part of his prophecies: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower

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and with this they hope to annihilate the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity. But this is vain, as the Hebrew radical *halam*, from which *halma* is derived, does not mean merely a very young girl, but a *concealed virgin*, whom no man has approached. St. Jerome (Comment. on Isai., lib. iii.), who of all commentators and interpreters of Holy Scripture was best acquainted with Hebrew, maintains, fearless of any refutation that the Jews could allege, that *halma* in the Holy Scripture signifies a pure virgin, in all her innocence, but never a married woman. And Luther, who made so deplorable a use of much real science, exclaims with characteristic vehemence: "If by chance there can be found a Jew or any other Hebraizer who can show me in any passage, the word *halma* signifying a woman in any state and not a virgin, I will give him a hundred florins," &c. (Works, VIII. 129.) Mahomet, too, thus renders his testimony to Mary: "Mary, daughter of Imram, who preserved her virginity, and we had sent our Spirit upon her, and she made us believe the word of the Lord and his Holy Scripture." The Seventy, the Chaldaic Paraphrase, Onkelos, Jonathan, all the venerable series of Fathers have explained the word *halma* by *virgin*, and Mary, virgin before, during, and after the birth of our Lord, will to the shame of her enemies ever be the object of our admiration and pious love.

* Matthew i. 22.



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shall rise up out of his root."* The Holy Fathers and interpreters all accord in saying that the rod is the Blessed Virgin; the flower, Christ; and the root, the family of David. The gentle St. Bernard explaining this prophecy, says: "It is evident that the Blessed Virgin mother of God is the rod, and that her divine Son is the flower; pure and ruddy flower, chosen out of thousands; a flower on which the very angels long to fix their gaze; a flower whose balmy perfume recalls the dead to life, and the flower too of the fields and not of the garden. But O Virgin," pursues the Saint, "thou art the sublime rod! And to what a height rises the summit of thy sanctity! Thou risest to him who is seated on the throne, to the God of majesty! O truly heavenly plant, most precious and most holy! O true tree of life, worthy to bear the fruit of salvation!†"

Isaias foretells the Blessed Virgin still better, when after having, with all the desires of his heart, described the victorious Cyrus, that liberator of the Jews, who was to be a figure of Christ, the prophet, animated by the Spirit of God, takes his flight upwards and soars to the true liberator Jesus, who is the end of all prophecy, and cries: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour,"‡ thus urging on the happy day when the quickening Spirit should descend on the Virgin, and she fructified by him should bear a son, that the riches of heaven might become riches of earth, and that heaven and earth should form only one single field, a single germination. Now this earth which was to produce the precious fruit of life, perfectly prefigures Mary. The Seraphic Doctor also compares her to the earth: "What is more humble or more useful," says he, "than the earth?

* Isaias xi. 1. † Sermon II. in Adv. Dom ‡ Isaias xlv. 8.

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We all tread the earth beneath our feet yet live on its fruits. Do we not draw from the fulness of the earth our food and clothing, bread and wine, wool and linen, and all necessaries of life? What then is more humble, or more useful than the earth? So too, what is more humble or more useful than Mary? By her humility she is the lowest of all creatures, and by her fruitfulness she is the most useful; for, from whom do we receive what is necessary to our spiritual life, except from Mary?"* The earth for Adam bore only thorns and brambles; but, at the coming of Christ, justice germed on the earth, and from it sprung the just, apostles, martyrs, virgins, confessors. Finally, Mary was foretold by the prophet under this image of the earth, because supernaturally fructified by the Holy Ghost, she bore our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, from whom and by whom we receive all graces which lead to eternal happiness. "Therefore," adds the Holy Doctor, "Isaias predicts Mary when he says: 'Let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour.'

Many have believed that Balaam was a false prophet or magician who rendered himself famous by his divinations or presages, and the apostle St. Peter himself calls him mad;† yet as the Holy Scripture speaks in such a way as leads us to suppose him a prophet of the true God, we shall cite his prophecy also. Invited by Balac King of Moab to curse the children of Israel, he on the contrary poured forth blessings upon them; and coming to encouraging hopes for that people, he predicts with singular clearness the time of the Messias' coming. Aloft on the rugged mountain of Pharga, with incoherent and mysterious words, he cries; "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not near. A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel; and shall strike the

* In Spec. lect. 7. † 2 Peter ii. 16.



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chiefs of Moab, and shall waste all the children of Seth."* These expressions, which directly regard the Messias, called in the Apocalypse "the bright and morning star," may also perfectly apply to her whom the Church salutes justly under the beautiful name of "Morning Star" and "Star of the Sea."

If God by the voice of the prophets was pleased to make known to the Jewish people his first-born among the daughters, he did not even abandon those who dwelt in the unhappy blindness of heathendom. Foreseeing that few would hearken to the inspired prophecies of the Hebrews, he raised up in various parts of the world, maidens, who, as St. Jerome assures us,† had as the reward of their chastity the signal privilege of announcing the future, whence they were called Sibyls. And here, we shall remark with Saint John Damascenus,‡ that those distinguished for the clearness with which they spoke of Mary were the Sibyls of Erythrea, Tibur, and Cumæ. They first revealed the beauteous name of Mary in these words: "A mother named Mary shall spring from the race of the Jews, and of her shall be born, by the sole power of the Holy Spirit, the Son of God called Jesus; and she shall be a virgin before and after his birth, and her son shall be at once true God and true man." The second reveals the happy land that is to be the home of the Man-God: "Christ shall be born in Bethlehem, he shall be announced in Nazareth: happy the mother who shall nurture him with her milk." Finally, the Cumæan, as St. John Damascenus

* Numbers xxv. 17.—Balaam by saying, "I shall behold him, but not near," intends to convey the idea that his descendants shall see him; as in fact they did in the person of the Wise Men, who came to adore Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem, as soon as the star, which announced his birth, appeared in the heavens. The ancient rulers of the Synagogue so understood it, and applied this sublime prophecy of Balaam to the Messias. See Marchini and other commentators.

† Lib. I. adv. Jovin. ‡ Hom. II. de iis qui in fid. migrant.

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says, predicts not only that the Magi, led by a star, will come to adore, in the arms of his virgin mother, the King of the heavenly hosts, borne by her, but also penetrating still further in thought, she predicts that in the last age the Son of God shall be humbled.*

* In Carthagenus (Lib. III. Hom. viii. De dupl. Christ. nativ.), the sibyl's words are thus given: The Erythrean, "Exurget mater de stirpe Judæorum, nominæ Maria, et procreabitur ab ea sine commixtione viri, de Spiritu Sancto, Filius Dei, nomine Jesus, et ipsa virgo ante partum et post partum; qui vero ab ea nascetur erit verus Deus, verusque homo." The Tiburean: "Nascetur Christus in Bethlehem, annuntiabitur in Nazareth: felix mater cujus ubera lactabit." The Cumæan: "In ultima ætate humiliabitur Deus, humiliabitur proles divina." Besides these three sibyls, the last of whom was called the Cumæan, because she dwelt in a grotto near the village of Cumæ; there were many others, known by different names, such as Deiphobus, Demophila, Amalthæa, Hierophile; the most ancient being that of Delphos, called Alemi, and sometimes Daphne. Euryphile gave forth her oracles at Samos; the Hellespontic at Marpesus, a village on the Hellespont; the Phrygian at Ancyra; the Libyan in Libya; it will be remembered with pleasure that the sibyl of Tibur, called Albuna, prophesied not on the banks of the Albuna or Anio, but in the sandy deserts of Africa. It is said that from Lamia, daughter of Jupiter, the Sibylla of Africa, all these prophetesses took the name of sibyls. When Tarquin the Proud was building the famous temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, a woman of strange form appeared before him, and offered him for sale nine volumes, which she said she had herself composed. Unconscious that this woman was one of the renowned sibyls, Tarquin disdainfully repulsed her. Burning three of the books, the sibyl returned to the king asking the same price for the remaining six. Accused of imposture she burnt three more; and coming to the king a third time, asked again the same sum for the three. Surprised at this strange conduct, the king consulted the augurs, who blamed him, and bade him buy the books at any price. He bought them, and the sibyl disappeared; these books were deposited in an urn of stone, which was placed under a vault of the building they were raising. Tarquin confided the custody of these books to two persons, but the number of guardians was subsequently increased to fifteen, who formed the sacred college of the Fifteen, and never in extraordinary epochs of the republic and empire, failed to consult these sibylline books and apply the oracles. Virgil in his fourth eclogue recalls these predictions, applying to the son of Pollio what the Cumæan sibyl had foretold of the Redeemer, and so clear and evident is the application, that some have regarded this eclogue as a prophecy relative to the birth of Jesus Christ, so universally was it believed that the time for

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So great was the faith in these oracles throughout the world, that according to St. Epiphanius, in his life of Jeremias, and of Dorotheus in his Symbol,* temples were erected with this inscription, "Virgini Parituræ," "To the Virgin Mother."†

According to all that we have stated in this and the preceeding chapter, we have clearly shown the sublimity, glory, and merit of our august Lady whom God from the cradle of the race promised to man as the future mother of the Redeeming Word of that Virgin whom God was pleased to hide beneath the mysterious veil of so many symbols, announce under so many figures, represent in so many invincible heroines, and predict by many prophetical oracles.

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the coming of the Messias had arrived. Besides, whatever Virgil's opinion may have been, it is certain that the Greek and Latin Fathers, zealous of proving the truth of the Catholic religion by arguments best adapted to convince those whom they sought to instruct, sometimes used the sibylline oracles. Clement of Alexandria (Stromata, lib. vi.), counsels such as could not apply their understanding to the study of the Catholic dogmas, to open the books of the Greeks, and read the sibylline oracles touching the Son of God who was to be born of a virgin. St. Cyril advises the reading of the sibylline books as containing predictions of the truths taught by faith. St. Augustine esteemed these books highly; he even used the eclogue we have cited, as an authority. Finally, Metaphrastes (April 8) states that St. Procopius, martyr, used these predictions before Flavian, the judge and persecutor of the Christians, in order to prove the dignity, name, and glory of Mary, and the divinity of her Son.

* Lezioni istorichi e morali del P. Tomaso F. Rivero, ex-General of the Regular Clerks of the Congregation of St. Paul, pt. 1, lect. 1 et 3.

† The oratory which Elias built on Mount Carmel was dedicated by him to the Virgin Mother, "Virgini Parituræ." This chapel was called semnæum, which means place dedicated to an empress; now this empress can only be Mary, empress of heaven and earth. (History of Mount Carmel, ch. xxxi.) [The Druidical temple at Chartres was also dedicated to the "Virgini Parituræ."]

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CHAPTER VI.

PARENTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE holy mother of God, according to the prophetic oracles, was to be born of the tribe of Juda, and of the royal race of David,* which in the uninterrupted course of several centuries, gave first to the throne of Israel, then to that of Juda, so many monarchs illustrious for the sanctity of their lives, their glorious achievements and splendid triumphs. But the sins of David's kingly successors, and those of the people, drew on the Jewish nations the chastisements of Heaven; among others, their various captivities, and chiefly their long and dreary bondage

* The care of the Hebrews in registering the names of the members of their families is well known. If a brother died childless, another brother was bound to marry the widow and prevent the extinction of the family; this took place to keep an exact account of the generations, for it was known to a certainty that Christ was to be born of the family of David. The confusion which has taken place in the descent of the Hebrew families since the birth of our Lord, is the best proof of the coming of the Redeemer and the vanity of the present hopes of the Jews.



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at Babylon. After this captivity, the royal dignity lost its splendor; the power thenceforward exercised by princes and governors was confounded with that of the sanhedrim, which was soon but a shadow of power; and towards the fulness of time, the sanhedrim sank so low as to be the slave of the Cæsars and of an Ascalonite king. So fallen from its grandeur was the royal race of David, so obscure and wretched, that his ignored descendants were mingled with the mechanics and shepherds. Nevertheless as Jesus Christ, so far as his temporal generation was concerned, was to descend from the royal stock, it follows that the happy parents of the first born of the power, love and greatness of God, were also to descend in a right line from him. Although fallen then from the splendor of the throne, and humbled by poverty, they could not be more illustrious in nobility of blood, nor more glorious by the renown of their ancestors;* and this was to be so, as Isaias had long before predicted it in these mysterious words: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root." The prophet, says St. Jerome,‡ employs the word root, because the root, having neither leaves nor branches, expresses completely that the mother of God was to be born of that family when David's posterity should have lost the splendor of the throne and diadem. Moreover, this seems entirely in accordance with the admirable economy of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, inasmuch as the Son of God, that almighty physician, came into the world to heal our mortal wounds, of which the deepest and most incurable is pride. He chose to be born of poor, humble, obscure parents, rather than of rich and powerful ones, provided with all that pampers human pride, in order to give us by example an efficacious remedy; and that

* In cap. ii. Isai.

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the Virgin, chosen from all eternity to be his mother in time, might resemble him, she, like him, was to descend from an illustrious royal family fallen into obscurity, and was to lead a life of humility amid shepherds and mechanics.

While the sacred books mention with honor the royal birth of the blessed parents of our august lady, the most blessed Mary, and name Zachary and Elizabeth, the parents of Christ's precursor, it seems strange that the Evangelists should be absolutely silent even as to the name of the fortunate parents of the Blessed Virgin. Yet even this, well pondered, turns to our greater advantage, as it teaches us not to seek with vain curiosity what it is not necessary to know, to despise earthly honor and greatness, and detach our hearts from all that worldly men esteem and so eagerly seek. Moreover, it would have been useful to name Mary's blessed parents only in case she received from them her greatest ornament, while in fact she reflects back on them the splendor of her own glory, having herself become worthy to bear the Incarnate Word. In this connection that holy bishop, cardinal and doctor of the Church, Peter Damian, thus expresses himself: "There are some who, wishing to know what is useless, seek with vain and excessive curiosity who was the father and who the mother of Mary. They seek in vain what the Evangelist has deemed it superfluous to relate; had this knowledge been necessary, so noble an historian would not have neglected to give it to us, inasmuch as it is the constant practice of the sacred writers never to say what can injure, and never to omit what it is useful to know." *

This being so, let it suffice us to know, that from time immemorial it has been constantly held that the blessed parents of the Immaculate Virgin were Joachim and Anne, both

* Hom. III. in Nativ. B. V. M.



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of very noble and very ancient origin, as Nicephorus relates.* Their very names indicate the glorious lot reserved for them, as Joachim means "Preparation of the Lord," and Anne signifies "Grace of the Lord." These names, Joachim and Anne,† have been handed down by a tradition which seems to go back to their times, as we cannot say when it began, and it is thus a certain proof.

Joachim was of the royal race of David, and born, according to tradition, at Bethlehem.‡ It is also a received opinion that he afterwards went to Nazareth, a little town in Galilee, and that, in consequence of his poverty, he took up his abode there.§ This spot, contemptible in the eyes of carnal

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* Hist. Eccl. lib. I.

† Tillemont, Note 3 on the life of the B. V. M.—Baillet, Life of St. Joachim and St. Anne; and F. Perry, Exercise XVIII.

‡ The most common opinion is, that they were both born in Bethlehem. We read indeed in the ancient breviary of Sixtus V., "Joachim, a Galilean of Nazareth, of a royal race;" and of St. Anne: "Anne, mother of the Virgin Mother of God, daughter of Gaziri, of the tribe of Juda, born in Bethlehem." Fulbert, (in Act. Sanct. Bollandi, July 26, § 2, Comment. hist. n. 19,) says that St. Anne was born at Bethlehem, and St. Joachim at Nazareth. Adriconius (in Hierus. n. 37. ' Zuelard in Itiner. lib. III.) says that both were born in the largest city of Galilee, called Sephora, or rather Sephorum, which some call also Diocæsaræa. Some esteemed writers cited by Poza (*Elucid. Deip.* p. 233), and by Cuperus (n. 19), maintain that the ancestors of St. Joachim retired into that stronghold when Judea was desolated by the wars described in the books of the Macchabees. Brocard, adopting this opinion with regard to Joachim, says: "Two leagues, south of Cana in Galilee, is the city of Sephorum, where Joachim, the father of the Blessed Virgin Mary is said to have been born." (*Descrip. Terræ Sanctæ, de Civit. Sephorum, Nazareth et Monte Thabor*, p. 14, tom. IV. *Antiq. Canisii.*)

§ This opinion seems quite probable to the Bollandists, and especially to Henschenius, as appears by his *Comment. hist.* § 2, n. 7, 20th March. St. Jerome (tom. IV. *de Nativ. Virg.*), an author beyond suspicion, and well versed in biblical matters, speaks very honorably of the condition of Joachim and Anne; and among other things he says that they divided their property into three parts; the first for the temple, the second for the poor, and the third they kept for themselves. They did this for twenty years, and also made a vow to offer God in his temple the child

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and worldly men, was perfectly in accordance with that humility which shone forth in every circumstance of Joachim's life, and estimable, moreover, according to the infallible maxims of the faith. Anne was the daughter of Matthew, a priest of the tribe of Levi. She was born, it is believed, at Bethlehem,* of the priestly family of Aaron: which seems evident, inasmuch as Elizabeth, wife of Zachary the priest, was, as a member of this family, cousin to the Blessed Virgin, and niece of St. Anne. Thus by the marriage of Anne with Joachim, were blended the royal and priestly lines, that no glory should be wanting to her who was to be born of their union, and be one day the mother of the expected Messias.

The life of this couple at Nazareth, was, in the words of Scripture, a full life, because, devoting themselves to the divine service, they went on constantly increasing in grace. And here, after the example of the Holy Doctors, we delight to apply to Joachim and Anne what the angelic doctor says of the Blessed Virgin Mary, namely, that she was full of grace, because no creature was so near as she to the very source of grace, Jesus Christ. Now we may piously believe that the holy parents of our dear and august Queen, excepting Mary and at a due distance, were more rich in grace and holiness than all other creatures, since, after their blessed daughter, they were least remote from that divine source. Were they not, in fact, the grandparents of Christ? Was not Christ, according to the flesh, their grandson? Did they not communicate their own substance to that beloved daughter, by whom the

whom they so ardently desired and for whom they raised to heaven so many fervent prayers. We may combine these two opinions, and say that, reduced from their ancient opulence, they were reduced to a modest fortune, without being in absolute poverty.

* See the previous note as to the birth-place of St. Joachim, where we also speak of St. Anne.

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Eternal Word has put on our mortal flesh? After these considerations we must exclaim: "O miracle of glory! O prodigy of excellence and greatness!"

As they were rich in grace and sanctity, all beheld admirably effulgent in them, the humility which modestly annihilates itself on the natal soil, and the resignation which bends with docility beneath the divine will, and the mortification which joyously applies its powers to self-combat, and frequent fasts united to abstinence which renders it more perfect, and the devout psalmody which leaps and exults in the praises of God, and holy reading which ever meditates on the law of God, and heavenly contemplation which soars to God and rests happily in him, and conjugal chastity which fears the slightest stain, and the love of all virtues which renders us beyond expression dear and agreeable to God. Hence St. Epiphanius says: "The hand which had formed these two hearts, had united them together in the sweetest bonds of perfect love; and they were a beautiful model of the interior and perfect life. Joachim on the mountain raised to heaven continued fervent prayers to quicken the delivery of Israel; and Anne in the privacy of her dwelling constantly offered herself a sacrifice to God in the fervor of her devout prayer."*

It is therefore with good right that the same holy doctor calls them the holy parents of a holy virgin, dear and agreeable to God, all the days of their life, by all the virtues with which they were adorned. St. Andrew of Crete† calls Joachim "mild, modest, sober, nourished with the divine law and constantly faithful to his God;" and he calls St. Anne "a tender lover of God, ever temperate and ever chaste." St. John Damascene from their sanctity concludes that of their daugh-

* *Orat. de laud. Virg.* † De dormit. Deip., lib. I. ch. vii.

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ter, and calls them blessed.* He admires the august plant which bore so fair a fruit, and he remarks that their actions were worthy of God who chose them, and worthy of the Virgin who was born of them. And as, according to all the theologians, Fathers and Doctors,† when God chooses a creature for any sublime work, or to invest it with any specific character, he loads it with all the graces, enriches it with all the gifts necessary to that work or that character, we may easily imagine with what graces he must have enriched the souls of these two spouses whom he had chosen to bless the whole world; for of them was to be born the Queen of the world, the chosen Virgin, fair, pure, Immaculate Mary, by whom the Eternal Word of the Father, the Creator and Lord of all things, was to put on our mortal flesh.

Although many years had elapsed, no fruit was born of their union. They were old, very old indeed, St. Jerome tells us,‡ and the unceasing tears which Anne shed in the presence of God had not been able to render her fruitful. Sterility constantly exposed them to insult and derision, for it was a reproach among the Hebrews, and regarded as a chastisement of Heaven; the certainty which the Jews had that the

* Hom. I. de Virg. Mariæ nativ.

† St. Thomas, 3 p. q. 27. art. 2: Unicuique datur gratia secundum id ad quod eligitur.—St. Bernardin, Serm. X. a. 2, c. 1. *de B. V.*: Regula firma est, quod quando Deus aliquem aligit ad aliquam statum, omnia boni illi dispensat quæ illi statui necessaria sunt, et illum copiose decorant.—Suarez, *in* 3 p. *Disp.* 18, sect. 4: Deus unicuique dat gratiam accommodatam statui et muneri suo. This is conformable to reason; for it becomes God's infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, that in the economy of election and predestination, dependent on his will and pleasure, he gives the elect and predestined the means which, in his infinite knowledge, he foresees necessary, that all may happen according to his eternal disposition, and grants the graces suitable to the honorable accomplishment of the mission which he confides. To doubt this, would be to offend against God's wisdom, providence, power, &c.

‡ St. Jerome, *De Nativ. Virg.*

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Messias was to be born of a woman of their nation, caused them all to consider barrenness as a manifest sign of reprobation, as a malediction for the family.

Although they lived resigned to the divine will, they always felt shame and regret that they could not nourish the hope of being numbered among the progenitors of the Redeemer.

On account of their age, for Anne had almost reached her sixtieth year, they had no hopes of arising from this great humiliation, a humiliation experienced still more sensibly on an occasion which we shall state. They had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate, according to custom with all the Jewish people, the Encænia or feast of the Dedication,* and also to offer their presents to the Lord. Now it happened that when Joachim and Anne approached the altar to present their offering, Issachar the priest,† instead of receiving it with the usual courtesy and piety, not only refused it, but publicly loaded Joachim with reproach on account of his wife's sterility, as if this providential barrenness were a punishment from God. While on the one side this divine wisdom per-

* The feast of the Dedication of the Temple was called in Greek Encænia. It was celebrated at Jerusalem, every year, with great solemnity, in the month of December, the Casleu of the Jewish year. It was instituted to recall the memory of the dedication made by Judas Macchabeus, after the temple had been profaned by Antiochus, 170 B. C. We find that this feast was celebrated with great joy, with an octave like that of the Tabernacles (2 Mac. x.); and it was unanimously decreed among the Jews, that it should be annually celebrated with the same pomp. The people always gathered to it in crowds, moved by a feeling of piety, or joy at having been delivered from Grecian bondage. The Hebrews had two other solemnities of the same name; the Dedication of the Temple by Solomon, and that in memory of Zorobabel and the return from the Babylonian captivity.

† The name of this priest is uncertain. Eustace calls him Ruben, and St. Jerome, Isaac. He was certainly not a high-priest, as his name is not in the catalogue of Hebrew pontiffs. He was, doubtless, a priest of the second order, appointed to receive offerings.

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fected their virtue to render them worthy to bear the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the other he prepared her admirable conception by a miracle of his grace. All the Fathers agree in saying that God wished Mary to be born of sterile parents, in order to make it evident that the august child had not been begotten by the concupiscence of the flesh, but by divine grace.* In fact, God, who exalteth the humble, was not long in rewarding the faith, hope, and prayers of these blessed spouses by overwhelming them with a joy the greater as it was the less expected, and with a glory the more sublime as the Virgin, the fruit of their long delayed fecundity, was to be more great, more admirable, more holy, and more worthy.

According to St. Epiphanius, St. John Damascenus, and St. Germanus,† when Joachim and Anne left the temple after the reproach addressed to them by Issachar, they resolved to renew their prayers in order to obtain of the divine goodness the fruit of benediction; and as solitude favors recollectedness of mind, Joachim retired alone to the top of a mountain; and Anne in the little garden of the house which Joachim possessed at Jerusalem. In this retreat, uniting fervent prayers to fasting, they earnestly begged God to take away their reproach, by granting a child to their desires; and like the prophetess Anne, the mother of Samuel, who, in a similar position, implored the Almighty with humble confidence and lively ardor, and was heard, Anne with tears renewed the promise, that if God granted her a child, she would consecrate it to the service of the temple; Joachim

* St. Ildephonsus, Serm. III. *de Natiu. B. V. M.*—St. John Damascenus, Orat. I. *de Natiu.*—St. Germanus, Orat. *de Natiu. Deip.*—Nicephorus, *Hist Eccles.* lib. I. c. vii., and others.

† See last note.



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by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost made the same prayer and the same promise.

The humility of the two spouses was not unrewarded; their prayer had its fruit. According to St. Germanus, while they were in contemplation, the Almighty deigned to send them an angel—according to St. Jerome the angel Gabriel*—to announce that the divine clemency had heard their prayer, and that, joy superabounding in the heart where humility, hope and faith had abounded, Anne the wife of Joachim should become fruitful. It is more easy to imagine than to describe the peace and joy which these two elect souls of God enjoyed; for Anne did not, like Sara, doubt the heavenly messenger; nor Joachim like Zachary, the father of the Baptist. Hence, full of gratitude to that God who disposes all things sweetly, they both proceeded to the temple according to the direction of the angel, and met before the golden gate; and entering together, they offered to the Most High the most heartfelt thanksgiving for the favor which they had obtained. Soon after the angel's message, Anne was in fact delivered from her ignominious sterility, and became pregnant of Mary, who had been predestined, from all eternity, to conceive in her immaculate womb, and to bring forth in time the Word made flesh.

All the admirable economy of grace, or the principle of

* St. Jerome, *De Nativ. Virg.*—St. Epiphanius and St. Nicephorus assure us, according to tradition, that God, by the ministry of an angel, made known to Joachim and Anne the conception of Mary. Theologians, laying down as a principle, the doctrine of St. Ambrose (*De Inst. Virg.* c. 5), when he says: "*Virgo a nulla illustrium sanctorum vincitur in privilegiis gratiæ,*" derive this as a consequence. This opinion is also proved by analogy; angels announce to Sara the conception of Isaac; an angel announced to Manue that of Sampson; an angel promised Rebecca the birth and predilection of Jacob; an archangel announced to Zachary the predestined John the Baptist; should not an angel announce to Anne the speedy conception of the Immaculate Mother of the elect?

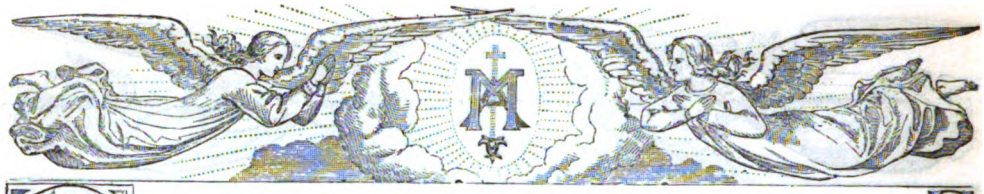
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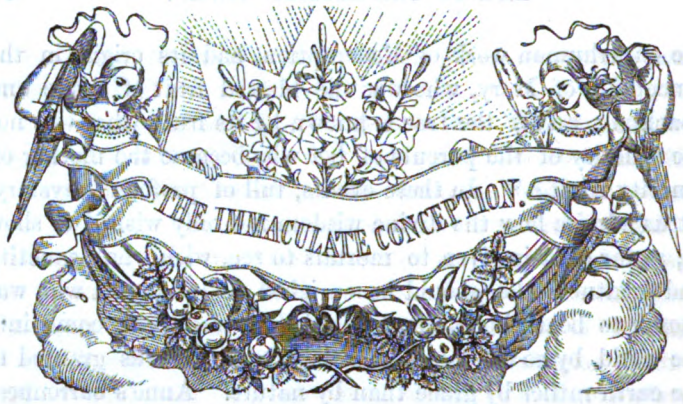
the superhuman work of Redemption, had its origin in the conception of Mary, who was the blessed fruit of Anne and Joachim; and if the tree is known by its fruit, what was not the sanctity of the parents of her who became the mother of sanctity itself? * In these events, full of profound mystery, let us admire how the divine wisdom not only wished to show us, as far as it is given to mortals to see, with what sanctity and greatness she should be enriched and adorned who was chosen to bear the Eternal Word, but also, that, come into the world by so solemn a miracle herself, she was granted to the earth rather by grace than by nature. Anne's barrenness was not then a chastisement, a penalty merited by her, but rather an admirable design of divine providence, to show us that the conception of our Most Holy Lady surpassed in every way the laws of nature; and was, moreover, an additional proof, that at times in this life, the faithful observer of the divine law suffers pains the more grievous, in proportion as the glory and felicity which God designs to bestow upon them even in this life, are greater.

* If we do not know the precise time when the holy parents of the Most Blessed Virgin began to be honored with special rite, it is at least credible that the Christians began to honor them at an early date; nevertheless, the Church has rendered them a solemn and universal Cultus only since the time of Gregory XIII., who first instituted the feast of St. Anne with a double office, and under Gregory XV. who instituted the feast of St. Joachim in 1623. We have sufficient testimony for the belief that these two saints were held in great honor in the Church from the earliest ages. Not only does St. Epiphanius, in a discourse composed in honor of the Blessed Virgin, speak in elegant praise of St. Joachim, as grandfather of Jesus Christ, but also St. John Damascenus, in three discourses on the Nativity of Mary, pronounces a noble eulogy of St. Joachim and St. Anne, as we have noted. St. Augustine, who flourished before St. John Damascenus, in his works against Faustus, the Manichean, blames that heresiarch for saying that St. Joachim was a priest of the tribe of Levi, and shows that he was descended from the royal tribe of Juda. We have a still more manifest proof as to St. Anne, for we read in the Greek Menology that the Emperor Comnenus took care that their feast was annually celebrated. See BENEDICT XIV. *De Festis* (Ven. 1792), p. 257.



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CHAPTER VII.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.



EVERY age in rivalry sought the glory of giving birth to that thrice holy Virgin * whom God, in his infinite mercy, had promised to guilty Adam, and whom he had predestined from all eternity, to bring forth in time the Divine Messias. But before time had begun, the happy age when this blessed creature was to be conceived was foreseen in God's decrees. This glory was reserved to the fortieth century from the creation. In the eighty-sixth year † of that happy cen-

* Certabant sæcula quodnam de ortu Virginis gloriaretur.

† It is an ancient and generally received opinion, that the Blessed Virgin left the temple, married to St. Joseph, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, as St. Fulbert of Chartres, according to tradition affirms. It is an opinion equally known, as we see by the Epistle of St. Ignatius to the Ephesians, that the angelic annunciation took place four months after her marriage. On the other hand, it is proved that the Redeemer was born at Bethlehem, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year of the world 4002, the 42d year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus Cæsar; now the age of the Blessed Virgin, with the year between her marriage and the



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tury, on the day corresponding to the eighth of our month of December,* Cæsar holding the empire of the world, and Herod the great, the kingdom of Judea, was conceived, for our joy, the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Queen and Mother, whose life we in spite of our unworthiness have undertaken to write.

According to St. John Damascenus, St. Germanus and St. Jerome,† this event is extraordinary and prodigious; not only because Joachim and Anne, already aged, were chosen to give being to this fruit of election, in order that this admirable pledge, though naturally produced, should seem divinely given, but more prodigious still, in that this blessed creature was conceived without the horrible stain of original sin, with which all Adam's unfortunate race without exception are born contaminated.

It would, doubtless, at any time have outraged the piety of the faithful, to utter the least doubt as to this singular privilege which God granted to Mary [and would now be a heresy, since the illustrious Pontiff, Pope Pius IX., has, with

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birth of Our Saviour make sixteen years, which gives 3986 as the year when the Immaculate Conception took place. To be further convinced, the reader may consult Father Graveson's treatise, *De mysteriis et annis Christi*, Dissert. I. § 1.

* This is proved by a Novella of Emmanuel Comnenus, cited by Theodore Balsamon (Observ. on Photius). Speaking of the Feasts to be celebrated by the people, the Emperor says: "The ninth of December, because then the Conception of the Mother of our God is celebrated." See BENEDICT XIV., *De Festis, Jesu et Mariæ Virginis*, ch. xv. § 3.

† Atque ex membris senilibus, et longe a naturæ fervore alienis, tanquam quidam divinitus datus fructus, producta. ST. JOHN DAMASCENUS.—Dedit sterili sobolem, quam ad Deum fusa præseminavit oratio. ST. GERMANUS.—Non libidinis est quod nascitur, sed divini muneris agnoscitur. ST. JEROME.—Add to this the excellent argument of similitude: Isaac, a figure of the Redeemer, was conceived by the barren Sara; Samuel, who became so celebrated as high-priest and prophet, was conceived by the sterile Anne; the precursor of the Divine Messias was born of parents advanced in years; consequently, it seems that Mary, who was to be the Mother of the Redeemer, should also be born of old and sterile parents.



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the unanimous request and consent of the prelates and fathers of the faithful throughout the world, proclaimed it a dogma of faith, clearly defining] what the holy Council of Trent teaches in its celebrated decree,* establishing the dogma of the transmission of Adam's sin to all his race, but proclaiming the Blessed Virgin Immaculate, and expressly declaring that it was not the intention of the Fathers of the Council to include Mary in that decree.

Yet, in order to excite the devotion of the faithful towards our Queen, so privileged by grace, we believe it best to set forth in a purely historical method, and with all possible brevity, the chief reasons [on which the decree was founded] and for which the clients of Mary have ever claimed for her this noble privilege, which gives her the glory of never having been the slave of the devil.

It is surely an indubitable doctrine, generally received by all the Fathers of the Church, that Mary, Mother of God, was exempt from almost all the laws common to other women; whence it follows clearly that she was exempt from the law of original sin.

In fact, without discussing whether she was conceived physically,† which is unimportant in this question, or whether her soul by a prodigy of grace, was united to her body at the very moment of her conception, is it not of faith that Mary,

* Declarat, tamen hæc ipsa Sancta Synodus, non esse suæ intentionis comprehendere in hoc decreto, ubi de peccato originali agitur, Beatam et Immaculatam Virginem Mariam Dei Genitricem; sed observandas esse constitutiones fel. rec. Sixti Papæ IV., sub pœnis in iis constitutionibus contentis, quas innovat.

† Conception is also very reasonably divided into active and passive. The active or physical, regards the generation of the body and its organization; the passive, as Benedict XIV. (De festis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Beatæ Mariæ Virginis et quorumdum sanctorum), with other theologians teaches, is effected when God animates the body already formed and organized. Holding as an article of faith, that Christ alone was conceived by woman, without marital concourse, some

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remaining a pure virgin, supernaturally and by the operation of the Holy Ghost conceived Jesus the blessed fruit of her chaste womb? Is it not a common law to all women to bring forth in pain? while Mary, as the Angelic Doctor,* and with him all the Holy Fathers and Doctors declare, experienced on the contrary an ineffable joy and an unspeakable delight in the birth of her Divine Son. Is it not a law common to all the children of Adam to be subject to commit at least some venial sin, some involuntary fault? while, according to the testimony of the Fathers and Doctors, the Blessed Virgin remained not only pure from all venial sin, but even from all involuntary concupiscence. Is it not a law common to all the children of Adam, that their bodies should return to the dust from which they sprang? while from all antiquity the Church celebrates the memorable day, when angels bore to heaven the glorified body of Mary? If Mary, then, by reason of her sublime dignity as Mother of the Eternal Word, was miraculously exempted from all these laws, and others too,

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Fathers and theologians, nevertheless, wish to remark prodigies in the active Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her mother's womb. These prodigies are: 1st. that Mary was begotten, as we have said, by parents already chilled by age; 2d. that her body was formed, if not in an instant, as some say, at all events in a few hours; which they prove, because 1st. the Church teaches that God prepared himself a worthy abode in the soul and in the body of Mary, and never effects his works slowly; 2d. the Church celebrates the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, not in the sense of sanctification, that is to say, of the moment when she was purified from sin, for example in the second instant, but in the meaning of the union of her soul and body. It seems rational and pious then to conclude that the body of Mary was united to the soul, at the very moment when it was conceived, for the Church renders honor only to sanctity; now, here below, among men, sanctity can subsist only with the body. Our tender love for the Blessed Virgin would ever lead us to attribute to our glorious Queen, all possible gifts and privileges, [and now that the Church has defined this, no other opinion can be held.]

* St. Thomas, 3 p. q. 33. c. 6.

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how could she but be exempt from the law of original sin, from the very moment when she was conceived? And, again, if the first Adam was a figure of the second Adam, that is of Jesus Christ, would it not be to say, that the figure is above the prefigured, if the former were moulded of virginal earth, that is, of earth not yet struck with malediction, and we make the latter born of an earth subject even for an instant to sin, and consequently to malediction? If God, when innocent Adam proceeded from his hands, prepared for his abode a garden of delight, removed consequently from every shadow capable of sullying its beauty, how could God, for the abode of his Son, innocent by his nature, when about to be born in time, prepare in the Virgin's womb a dwelling less beautiful than Eden, and less exempt from every shadow of sin? If Jeremias and John the Baptist, were born pure and sanctified, should not Mary be distinguished and exempted from all sin? How could she gain the promised victory over the serpent, if her pure soul had been for an instant sullied by the impure breath of the demon.

These arguments acquire a still greater force when we consider that the Church applies to Mary these words of Holy Writ: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing from the beginning . . . I was with him." * How can these words be said in truth, if the Blessed Virgin was for an instant sullied by sin? And if Adam, as the Angelic Doctor† teaches, had, as an infused habit, all the virtues which constitute the state of innocence; if Mary, according to the opinion of the Fathers,‡ surpasses in privileges

* Proverbs viii. 22–30.

† St. Thomas, 1 part. quæst. 95, art. 3.

‡ Virgo a nullo illustrium sanctorum vincitur in privilegiis gratiæ. St. Ambrose, *Lib. De Instit. Virg.*—Immensa fuit gratia, qua ipsa plena fuit, immensum

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and graces all the saints, and if she is that unique creature chosen by God, and who has only God above her, how can we but believe her to have been preserved from original sin?

All know that Assuerus was a great and powerful monarch, and that, in his power, he wished to exempt his beloved Esther, the image of Mary, from the universal decree which condemned to death all the innocent children of Israel. Esther in a suppliant attitude, was seen, with her countenance bathed in tears, imploring the salvation of all, more with tears than with words. What, cried Assuerus, what, O my beloved; couldst thou imagine that I, who chose thee out amid that immense assemblage of fair maidens, who have brought thee into my palace to share my royal couch and throne, in the hope that thou wilt be the mother of a most beauteous posterity, and the sweet protectress of my people, how couldst thou suppose thyself included in the fatal edict issued against thy nation? I am thy brother; fear not, thou shalt not die, this law is for all but thee."* As Assuerus chose to preserve Esther from death, so God wished that Mary his daughter, his mother, his well-beloved spouse should be exempted from original sin, and thus be immaculate; hence the Church well applies to her these words of Ecclesiasticus: "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree on Mount Sion. . . . . as a fair olive tree in the plains.

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enim vas non potest esse plenum, nisi immensum sit illud quo est plenum. Maria autem vas immensissimum fuit, ex quo illum qui cœlo major est continere potuit. St. Bonaventure *in Spec.* c. V.—Quod fœmina conciperet et pareret Deum, es et fuit miraculum miraculorum; oportuit enim, ut sic dicam, fœminam elevari ad quamdam æqualitem divinam per quamdam quasi infinitatem perfectionum et gratiarum, quam æqualitatem creatura unquam non experta est. St. Bernardine, Sermon LXI. ch. xvi.

* What is the matter, Esther? I am thy brother, fear not. Thou shalt not die: for this law is not made for thee, but for all others. Esther xv. 12, 13. This word brother is often used in the Scriptures to express tender love.

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. . . . I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatical balm ; I yielded an odor like the best myrrh. . . . In me is all grace of the way, and of the truth. . . . . My memory is unto everlasting generations. . . . My brook became a great river, and my river came near to a sea : " *. . . that is to say, my sanctity is so great, that it alone is, as it were, near the ocean of God's sanctity.

After this it is not difficult to resolve with regard to Mary the question agitated by some theologians on these words of St. Paul: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive." † In the first place, some theologians understand these words in the emphatic sense, frequently employed in the sacred writings ; ‡ others, aided by the light of grace, without stopping at this distinction, give an explanation which completely reconciles the words of the apostle with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. There are, they say, two modes of redemption ; one, that whereby we are all ransomed through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the other is the decree by which God has ordained that the Blessed Virgin

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* Ecclesiasticus xxiv. 17, 25, 28, 43. † 1 Corinth. xv. 22.

‡ The Holy Scriptures, as all the masters of biblical science teach, often use emphatical propositions, which are not to be taken in an absolute and universal sense. Thus we read in the 115th Psalm, "Every man is a liar." This phrase is cited by the Apostle St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans (iii. 4). In the 13th Psalm, "There is none that doeth good ; no, not one." This passage is also cited by the Apostle in the same Epistle (iii. 10). In Isaias (lxiv. 6) we read : "All our justice is as the rag of a menstruous woman." These and other like texts, taken in an absolute and universal sense, would be in contradiction with others in Holy Scripture, such as : "Noe was a just and perfect man" (Genesis vi. 9).—"The just shall see and shall rejoice" (Job xxii. 19).—"From the blood of Abel the just," &c. (Matt. xxiii. 35). Now reason requires that one text should not contradict another. By not taking, then, the text of St. Paul in an absolute sense, we may say : "All die in Adam," although the Blessed Virgin did not die, that is, did not sin in Adam.

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should be preserved from the universal contagion,* by anticipation of the redeeming death of the Saviour. Mary, thus redeemed in the very instant of her conception, could appear all fair and spotless, like the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, who is called "all fair" by Solomon.†

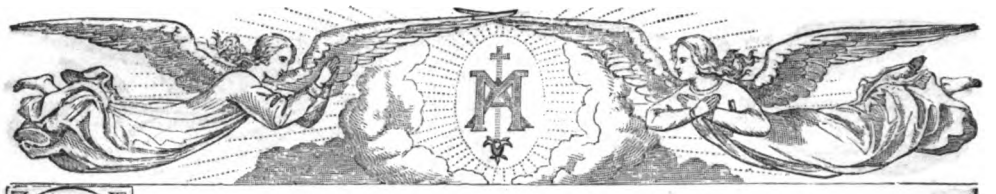
Passing to the question of the mode of the transmission of original sin,‡ we may easily regard the human race as a single family, which, in consequence of the crime of treason, has been condemned, in the person of its head, to lose liberty, property, and all the honors which it enjoyed, as long as it was faithful to the sovereign; and it is beyond all doubt, that if the father had not fallen, his descendants would not have been subjected to what is termed the *legal* penalty.

To show how an individual may be exempted from this penalty, jurisconsults employ the example of a master owning a female slave whom he has married without emancipating. They say that this master may emancipate the children of this slave in three ways: after they are born, after they are conceived, or before conception. Thus he may say: "I manumit thy son now born:"—"I manumit the child with which thou art now pregnant:" or "I intend that the child whom thou shalt conceive shall be exempt from slavery." In the first mode all men are born; in the second Jeremias and John Baptist, as we have said, came into the world: in the third, was born the Blessed Virgin, hence called "the first-born of God's daughters," who was so adorned with graces, and so exalted above all creatures, that she is the object of the ad-

* We have a proof of this preservation of Mary in the ancient Collect of the Mass of the Conception, published by order of Pope Sixtus IV., where we read: "Ex morte ejusdem Filii sui prævisa eam ab omni labe præservasti." Now this prayer would not have been granted by a special privilege to the order of St. Francis, if it contained erroneous doctrine.

† Canticle of Canticles, iv. 7. ‡ See Chap. I. p. 20, note.

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miration of men, of the rage of hell, and the glory of the Divine Creator.

Such a redemption became the Divine Father, who created Mary for himself, the Divine Son who was to be born of her, the Holy Ghost, who, by a great mystery, was to overshadow her. And as the Eternal Word, who by his own essence, is holy and immaculate, was to receive of a woman, his flesh and blood, it was necessary that she who was raised to so high an honor, should be also holy and immaculate. Now if this became the glory, sanctity and honor of God, he certainly did it, because his power is infinite, and it costs him absolutely nothing to make the possible the real: *Decuit, potuit, ergo fecit.**

Having thus considered it as becoming, let us now see how the Fathers, and councils, have been unanimous in attributing to the Blessed Virgin so beautiful and singular a privilege, and how nations, cities, universities, religious orders, in a word, all her pious children have, in emulous zeal, confirmed to the Blessed Virgin this till then unheard-of title, "Immaculate."

Although among the Fathers of the first ages of the

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* The reader will with pleasure read the elegant sonnet of a poet already cited, as it resumes most beautifully the reasons which prove the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

Who is this maid avenging man's error,
With starry brow, the moon beneath her feet,
Dread as an army all panting to meet
The dark coming foe, and awaken war's terror?
'Tis Mary, the Virgin, of God the elect,
Though dark, yet within all radiant as even;
'Tis Mary, conceived by a flat of heaven,
All pure from the spot, that all doth infect.
How 'mid the children of Eden's sad pair,
Could He who made them this sole one withdraw
From the doom the apple had heralded there?
He could—Almighty, his word is the law;
He should—that his glory more bright might appear;
Would—for in her his own mother he saw.

MARIA, RIME DE NERALCO. *Padova*, 1725.



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AARON.

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...ed, our heavenly Lady is not designated as an entire person as *conceived without sin*, and the question was not discussed openly in the fifth century, as we shall see, yet the most ancient Fathers attest in their writings, what was their belief in this respect. In the celebrated epistle of the priests of Achaia, an epistle which narrates the martyrdom of St. Andrew, we are told that the apostle preached the faith before the proconsul Egeus, and that he addressed the following words to the Virgin: "And because the human race was created of an immaculate earth, it was necessary that a perfect man should be born of an immaculate Virgin, in order that the Son of God, who had previously formed man, might restore the eternal life which they had lost by Adam."* Nothing can be more clearly does St. Dionysius of Alexandria declare that Mary was exempt from original sin; for he calls her "the ever-blooming rose of life, the holy tabernacle, not made by men, but formed by the Holy Ghost, and ever protected by the power of the Most High, preserved without corruption, and beautiful from head to foot."† Now he would not have used

* "Quia ex immaculata terra creatus fuerat primus homo, necesse erat ut ex immaculata Virgine nasceretur perfectus homo, quo Filius Dei qui vitam aeternam quam perdiderant homines per Adam restituere" (*Apud Bibl. Patr. Max. Gallandii*, I. 157.) I should not have cited this apocryphal authority, since it was regarded as spurious, while the original was unknown; but since the original text was found in the library of ... published by Charles Christian Wegg, all doubt has ceased, and the ... has inserted it as true and authentic, in his Calendar of the ... people, on the 30th of November.

... mundi matres: una autem et sola Virgo filia vitae genuit Verbum ... qui ante saecula ab hominibus non fabricatum sed Spiritu Sancto fluxit ... tum semper ... et signata est porta tabernaculi integra ... et violata ... quae servatum incorruptam et a peccatis ... Deo." *Epist. ad. Paulum Samosatenum episc. Antiochiae*, ... Paris, 1706.



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Church, our heavenly Lady is not designated with entire precision as *conceived without sin*, and the question was actually raised only in the 13th century, as we shall see, yet the most ancient Fathers attest in their writing, what was their opinion in this respect. In the celebrated epistle of the priests of Achaia, an epistle which narrates the martyrdom of St. Andrew, we are told that the apostle, proclaiming his doctrine before the proconsul Egeus, uses this expression with regard to the Virgin: "And because the first man had been created of an immaculate earth, it was necessary that the perfect man should be born of an immaculate Virgin, in order that the Son of God, who had previously formed man, should restore the eternal life which they had lost by Adam."*

No less clearly does St. Dionysius of Alexandria declare that Mary was exempt from original sin; for he calls her "the only daughter of life, the holy tabernacle, not made by men, but sealed by the Holy Ghost, and ever protected by the power of the Most High, preserved without corruption, and blessed from head to foot."† Now he would not have used

* "Et propterea quod ex immaculata terra creatus fuerat primus homo, necesse erat ut ex immaculata Virgine nasceretur perfectus homo, quo Filius Dei, qui antea condiderat hominem, vitam æternam quam perdiderant homines per Adamum, repararet." (*In biblioth. Patr. And. Gallandii*, I. 157.) I should not have cited this Epistle as an authority, since it was regarded as spurious, while the original Greek was unknown; but since the original text was found in the library of Bologna, and published by Charles Christian Woog, all doubt has ceased, and the famous Morcelli has inserted it as true and authentic, in his Calendar of the Church of Constantinople, on the 30th of November.

† "Multæ reperiuntur matres; una autem et sola Virgo filia vitæ genuit Verbum vivens et per se subsistens increatum et Creatorem ... Maria Deipara et Virgo tabernaculum sanctum ab hominibus non fabricatum, sed Spiritu Sancto firmatum, et ab eo protectum semper ... et signata est porta tabernaculi integra et incorrupta et inviolata ... eamque servatam incorruptam et a pedibus usque ad caput benedictam, &c." *Epist. adv. Paulum Samosatenum episc. Antiochiæ*, op. edit. de Magistris Romæ, 1796.

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such expressions, had he not believed Mary exempt from original sin, which leaves its stain on men, be their sanctity what it may. Origen, or the author of the homilies which bear his name, whoever he was, drawing a comparison between God and Mary, thus praises our heavenly Lady: "Of this only-begotten God, this mother is called the Virgin Mary, immaculate and worthy of the holy immaculate God, both peerless in their kind.*

St. Ephrem calls her *immaculate, all pure, exempt from all stain*, and proceeds to say that she is holier than the Seraphim, more glorious far than all the choirs of the heavenly host.† In his immortal refutation of the error of Pelagius, that the children of baptized parents are not born sullied by original sin, St. Augustine proves the dogma, and exempts Mary from the common law by these solemn words: "All are children of wrath, except the Blessed Virgin, concerning

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* Origen's exact words are in the Latin version: "Hujus itaque unigeniti Dei decetur hæc mater Virgo Maria, digna Dei immaculata sancti immaculati, una unius." And after an apostrophe to St. Joseph, on the merits of his spouse, he ends thus: "Hear ye that a virgin shall receive in her womb: not conceiving progeny from desire, for she was neither deceived by the persuasion of the serpent, nor tainted by his poisonous breath." Words which in themselves are an express and formal enunciation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

† *Orat. ad sanctissimam Dei Genitricem*, (interp. Ger. Vossius,) Rome, 1598. *De Sanctis. Dei Genet. Virginis Mariæ laudibus*, "Immaculata et intemerata, incorrupta et prorsus pudica, atque ab omni sorde ac labe peccati alienissima Virgo . . . inviolata, integra planeque pura et casta . . . sanctior Seraphim et incomparabilior reliquis omnibus supernis exercitibus gloriosior . . . immaculatam, immaculatissimam . . . semper benedictam . . . puram, quæ draconis nequissimi caput contriviti quæ semper fuit tum corpore, tum anima integra et immaculata."—"O Virgin, immaculate, stainless, incorrupt, and all chaste, most free from all sin or soil . . . inviolate, intact, and most pure and chaste . . . holier than the Seraphim, incomparably more glorious than all the other heavenly hosts . . . immaculate, most immaculate . . . ever blessed . . . pure, who hast crushed the serpent's head, who was ever immaculate and undimmed in soul and body."

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whom, for God's honor, I wish there to be no question when sin is treated of: for we know that more grace for overcoming sin in every point was conferred on her, by her meriting to conceive and bear him who evidently had no sin." *

St. Peter Damian attributes to Mary the signal privilege of which we speak: "The flesh of the Virgin assumed from Adam bore none of Adam's stains." † We shall lastly say, omitting other Fathers who would swell the list too far, that the seraphic doctor St. Bonaventure, taught that our august Queen had been full of grace in sanctification, that is to say, full of grace which preserves from the stain of original sin.‡ We have now reached the time of St. Bernard, when some began to attack this doctrine; and have first given the opinion of the Fathers of the Church on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, before speaking of the letter of that great Doctor to the Canons of Lyons on this question in which he took so active a part. Whoever will read that letter attentively, will see and be convinced that St. Bernard so earnestly opposed the celebration of the feast, only because the illustrious metropolis of the Gauls celebrated it without consulting the Holy See, and first obtaining the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff. In fact, St. Bernard closes his letter with these words: "But let what I have said, be said without prejudice to those wiser than I. To the authority and ex-

* "Excepta itaque sancta Virgine Maria, de qua propter honorem Dei nullam prorsus cum de peccatis agitur, haberi volo quæstionem; inde enim scimus quod ei plus gratiæ collatum fuerit ad vincendum omni ex parte peccatum, quæ conciperet parere meruit, quem constat nullum habuisse peccatum." (*Lib. de Nativ. et Gratiæ.*)

† Caro virginis ex Ada assumpta maculas Adæ non admisit. (*Sermo de Assumptione.*)

‡ Fuit plena gratia præveniente in sua sanctificatione, gratia scilicet præservativa contra fœditatem originalis culpæ. (Sermo II. de B. V.)

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amination of the Roman Church especially, this and all other similar questions I reserve: ready to amend by its decision whatever may be erroneous." * The Holy Doctor therefore did not entertain an opinion contrary to the Immaculate Conception of our heavenly Lady, but only opposed the celebration of the festival, because the canons had instituted it of their own authority, without first consulting the Holy See. It seems to us beyond a doubt that the Blessed Virgin chose to inspire one of her most devoted clients, with the idea of starting this question in a discourse so worthy of the Mother of God, in order that so great and signal a privilege might be the more honored and regarded as certain in the Church. In fact, after the Fathers, Doctors, and Saints had so long struggled in defence and support of this dogma, St. Bernard would not contradict it. Hence, the Immaculate Conception is clearly proved, as all now recognize it. Even before the Church had decided the question, the belief had become so universal that it was folly to doubt it.

Passing over the decree of the Council of Basle,† because

* Epist. clxxiv. Ad Canonic. Lugdunen, de Conceptione Sanctæ Mariæ. The holy Doctor thus concludes his letter: "Quæ autem dixi, absque præjudicio sane dicta sint sanius sapientis. Romanæ presertim Ecclesiæ auctoritati atque examini totum hoc, sicut et cætera quæ ejusmodi sunt, universa reservo; ipsius, si quid aliter sapio, paratus judicio emendare." Many have interpreted this letter in the sense of active, not passive conception; and others have treated it as spurious.

† The General Council of Basle met in 1431. Martin V. had convoked it at Pavia, and afterwards transferred it to Sienna, whence it finally passed to Basle. Eugene IV., Martin's successor, confirmed its sitting at Basle, and continued to preside there by his legate, Cardinal Julian. The chief objects of the Council were: 1st. The union of the Greek and Latin Churches; 2d. The general reform of the Church in its head and members, according to the decree of the Council of Constance. In the 36th session, held between the months of July and October,

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it was not then a lawful but a mere schismatic council, and without speaking of the desire of Pope Leo X. to define this question in the Council of Lateran,* we will say that the Fathers of the Council of Trent were fully resolved to define it in the terms proposed by Cardinal Pacheco: "With regard to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, the Sacred Council has nothing to define, since it is a well established, pious belief." However, some Bishops and religious of the order of Friars preachers opposed this resolution. Others supported them, saying, that to declare an opinion pious, was to declare the contrary one impious, and so implicitly decide the question. Then, to prevent every feeling of acerbity and maintain peace, the Council resolved not to employ expressions at variance with either of the two opinions. Accordingly, after much discussion, the decree of which we spoke in the beginning of this chapter was passed, and in it the Council order the Constitutions of Pope Sixtus IV. to be observed. From this it follows: 1st, that the majority in numbers and distinction of the Fathers, assembled in Council, showed themselves adherents of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and disposed to give it a dogmatic definition; 2d, that the Council did not comprise the august

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1439, the Council declared that the opinion of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin was a pious opinion, in conformity with the worship of the Church, Catholic faith, and right reason; and ordered the feast of the Conception to be celebrated on the 8th of December. Cardinal Torquemada, a Dominican, had a considerable share in this decision. The Council of Basle is generally regarded as œcumenical to the 25th session inclusively, held May 7, 1437. Be this as it may, we see evidently the opinion of the Fathers as to the Immaculate Conception of Mary. In another Council held at Avignon, by Cardinal Peter de Foix, of the Order of St. Francis, in 1459, the same decision was made as at Basle.

* The question was confided to the celebrated Cardinal Cajetan, as we see in his works.

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Virgin in the decree relative to the transmission of original sin.*

After beholding the sentiment of the Fathers of the Council of Trent, we will set forth the opinions of the Sovereign Pontiffs, beginning by Sixtus IV., who was elevated to the chair of St. Peter in 1471.†

Pope Sixtus, who, while a simple religious of the order of St. Francis, had composed a treatise in favor of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady,‡ published two constitutions, one in 1476, the other in 1483. In the former he grants various indulgences, on the festival of the Conception, to the faithful who recite the office and mass approved by him, and assist at the Canonical hours; in the latter he condemns any one who ventures to call it a sin to celebrate the feast, or says that it is a heresy to believe that the Blessed Virgin was exempt from original sin.§

St. Pius V. not only confirmed these constitutions, which some did not observe, but also, by his bull of 1560, threatened with suspension *a divinis* the Bishops who did not execute

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* See PALLAVICINI, History of the Council of Trent, Book VII. ch. vii. Father STROZZI, Controversy as to the Conception of the Immaculate Virgin; and Father PIEZZA, in his book on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, mother of God, speak at still greater length.

† He succeeded Pope Paul IV., and was created Pope on the 9th of August. Born near Savona, his family name was Francis de la Rovere; he was General of the Order of St. Francis, and Cardinal of the title of St. Peter ad Vincula. He was well versed in theology and canon law. Paul IV. sat on the chair of Peter thirty years and four days; and left many memorials at Rome, which is indebted to him for some of its finest ornaments.

‡ See WADDING, in his works, one entitled: "Scriptores Ordines minorum;" and the other, "De Legatione Philippi III. et Philippi IV. ad Paulum V. et Gregorium XV. pro definienda controversia de Conceptione Virginis." These two Kings of Spain had sent ambassadors to urge the definitive sentence of the cause.

§ Benedict XIV. in his learned work on the Feasts, already cited, believes,

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them; and then leaving each one to believe interiorly as he pleased, forbid preachers to discuss the matter in the pulpit. After Pope Pius V. the Sovereign Pontiffs Paul V., Gregory XV., and Alexander VII. also published bulls confirming this pious belief; and in our day Gregory XVI. permitted the beautiful title of Immaculate to be added in the preface of the Mass and in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, in all dioceses where the Bishops respectively solicited it; which it is consoling to say, included almost all the Bishops of the Catholic world. [Finally his present Holiness, Pope Pius IX., on the 8th of December, 1853, to the great joy of Christendom, surrounded by Bishops from every clime, defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.]

This beautiful and singular title of IMMACULATE given to Mary, began to appear gradually in some of the Fathers of the primitive ages of the Church: admitted then by all nations, it passed from age to age, like a river, which, scarcely visible as it leaves the fountain head, increases as time goes on, and, as it winds through the fields, attains such magnitude as to be taken for the sea itself.* In fact, what is the country in the world, what the savage land, the inhospitable

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with some probable foundation, that this second constitution of Sixtus IV. originated in a solemn discussion which took place at Ferrara, in presence of Duke Hercules D'Este; a discussion in which Vincent de Bandellis, of the Order of St. Dominic, maintained the opinion adverse to the Immaculate Conception, and afterwards published a treatise on this question, submitting the office and bull to examination; pretending, however, that he was not opposed to the Holy See, of which he recognized the authority. All know, too, that when the plague desolated Rome in 1476, Sixtus V., to appease the scourge, implored the protection of the Blessed Virgin Immaculate, and added this feast to the other festivals of Our Lady.

* This comparison will not seem exaggerated, if we compare the Adriatic Sea with the immense rivers Amazon and La Plata, each over a hundred miles wide at the mouth.

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shore, where our tender mother, the Blessed Virgin, is not honored by the glorious title of IMMACULATE? This devotion began in the East: for we find the Emperor Emmanuel Comnenus in one of his Novellæ enjoining the celebration of this solemnity,* which does not seem to have been only recently instituted, inasmuch as George, Bishop of Nicomedia, attests that it was commonly celebrated prior to the time of the Emperor Heraclius.† This fact is confirmed by another proof: the Archbishop of Armenia, who visited England in 1228, attested that in the East, among other feasts of Mary, they celebrated the festival of the Immaculate Conception;‡ and the reason he gave was, that the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, like that of St. John the Baptist, and of Christ himself, was announced by an angel.

It is not easy to determine when this feast passed from the East to the West. It is most credible that in consequence of the intercourse between the two empires, the clients of the Virgin Mother, must have celebrated at an early date this glorious and unique prerogative. The honor of this institution is generally conceded to England, for having celebrated it towards the close of the eleventh century, in consequence

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* Emmanuel Comnenus reigned from 1143 to 1180. Theodore Balsamon cites this Novella in his observations on the Nomocanon of Photius.

† Heraclius, sent by his father against Augustus Phocas, killed him, and was proclaimed Emperor, in the year 610, the third year of the Pontificate of St. Boniface IV., and was crowned by Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople.

‡ This Archbishop was received in the abbey of St. Albans, and Matthew of Paris thus speaks of him: "When asked by a monk, who sat beside him, whether in his country the Conception was celebrated; he answered, 'Yes, and for this reason, because the Conception took place on the angel's announcing it to Joachim, mourning and abiding in the desert. So, too, the Conception of St. John the Baptist for the same reason. As to the Conception of Our Lord, which took place on the angel's announcing to Mary, who conceived of the Holy Ghost, no one doubts.'"

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of a revelation made to an abbot of that country, named Elsin or Heribert.* Such is also the opinion of Baronius in his remarks on the Roman martyrology. The festival then passed to Normandy, next to France and to the illustrious church of Lyons; and it was on this occasion that St. Bernard wrote the epistle of which we have spoken, an epistle which was a signal to the nations, to flock together and support this singular privilege of Mary, and honor it by every kind of devotion.

After this we see a select and anxious cloud of theologians headed by the celebrated John Duns Scotus,† supporting this pious belief; and since then there is not a doctor of any repute that has not maintained and upheld it. The University of Cologne, that of Paris, so renowned on account of its vow,‡ those of Belgium, Portugal, Spain and Italy, in rivalry claimed the honor of attributing to Mary the beautiful title of Immaculate. Kingdoms, cities, religious brotherhoods, orders of knighthood, pious confraternities and guilds, all put themselves under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin,

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* Some hold that this solemnity began in consequence of a revelation made by an abbot to St. Anselm. Hence the Fathers of the Council of London, of 1238, (Concilia Ang. III.) decreed as follows: "Venerabilis Anselmi prædecessoris nostri, qui post alia quædam ipsius antiquiora solemnia, Conceptionis solemne superaddere dignum duxit, vestigiis inhærentes, statuimus et firmiter præcipiendo mandamus, quatenus festum Conceptionis prædictæ in cunctis Ecclesiis nostris Cantuariensis provinciæ festive et solemniter de cætero celebretur." "Adhering to the footsteps of our venerable predecessor Anselm, who deemed it proper to add the feast of the Conception to the other more ancient solemnities, we resolve and firmly commanding, direct the said feast of the Conception to be henceforward joyfully and solemnly celebrated in all the Churches of our province of Canterbury."

† He maintained this dogma with much warmth and applause in the university of Paris and in that of Louvain.

‡ The Doctors of the Sorbonne take a vow to maintain the Immaculate Conception of Mary, to the shedding of their blood.

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were instituted under this invocation, or derive their name from this glorious privilege.*

Even now we see the faithful of every age, sex, and condition, honor her in emulously attributing to her this sublime honor, so that their ingenuous piety seems ever to find some new means of manifesting it. Thus we might say that only one last homage was wanting; that our august Sovereign and Father, the immortal Pius IX., yielding to the impulse of his noble heart, and tender devotion to the divine Mother, should, as he has done, publish a solemn decree to define the Immaculate Conception as a dogma, in conformity to the entreaties addressed to his predecessors, and renewed to himself by almost all the Bishops in the Catholic world. It has been for the world a presage of new graces, benediction and joy.†

By these reasons, by so many authorities, by the ancient and universal devotion, which, far from decreasing, augments

* In honor of the Conception were instituted religious orders, such as that of the nuns, founded at Toledo, in 1484, by the most noble Beatrice de Sylva, a Portuguese lady; that of the Theatines, or Clerks of the Conception; the orders of knighthood in Spain, Portugal, and Bavaria, under the invocation of the Conception, and St. George. Whole kingdoms were put under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Immaculate, as Portugal and Brazil; and finally, various cities, not content with putting themselves under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin, chose also to adopt the name; thus the most holy Conception, in Chili, founded in 1550, by Peter Valdivia, conqueror of that country, and erected into an episcopal see by Pope Pius IV. in 1564; Conception de la Vega, in Hayti, founded by order of Columbus, in a beautiful plain, on the Camus, and made a suffragan see, dependent on St. Domingo. [So, too, Canada was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception; and the name given to the Mississippi river, by its holy explorer, Father Marquette, was River of the Conception.]

† The illustrious Cardinal Aloysius Lambruschini published at Rome, in 1842, a dissertation on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which soon received the deserved applause of the learned in various nations. In 1847, Father John Perrone, of the Society of Jesus, published on this same subject a profound theological dissertation; and after proving the Immaculate Conception by reasons of every kind, he showed that the Sovereign Pontiff might then define the dogma, in con-

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each day, it is clearly proved that this privilege belongs to the Mother of God. We shall say no more; and if we have spoken at such length on the subject, it must be set down to our ardent desire to exhaust a subject so dear to our heart, through the filial love we bear our heavenly Lady, a love beyond all thought and all expression.

We will terminate this chapter by applying to our heavenly Lady the words of Paralipomenon, in praise of the temple of Solomon. "The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man but for God."

Now if the Almighty chose that his temple should be immense, magnificent, extraordinary and unequalled on earth, so too the same God, who from all eternity chose the Blessed Virgin for a divine dignity, must have loaded her with privileges, and not only exempted her from original sin, but also raised her above all the Saints by the graces granted to her. This was really the case, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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sequence of the concurrence of all the necessary conditions; he adds, that the Church has defined other dogmas, which had less conclusive proofs than those which militate in favor of the Immaculate Conception.—[On the definition of the dogma, Father Passaglia, of the same Society, exhausted the subject in his ample and learned work on the same mystery.]

* Opus enim grande est, neque homini præparatur habitatio, sed Domini Deo. Domus quam ædificare cupio magna est, magnus enim Deus noster super omnes deos. (I. Paralip. xxix. 1.)



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CHAPTER VIII.

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES WHICH GOD GRANTED TO THE SOUL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

ASSUREDLY, there is no one but knows that Mary was in the order of nature the masterpiece of divine omnipotence, and still more so in the order of grace, because she was adorned with all the gifts of both, from the very instant that she was capable of receiving them. On beholding herself so enriched with God's gifts she exclaimed: "He that is mighty, hath done great things to me." * "Hence it results," says St. Ambrose, † "that in describing her glory and grandeur, every tongue stammers, every mind is bewildered." But, although the wonders which God has effected in Mary infinitely tran-

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* Luke i.

† "In ejus narratione omnes linguæ balbutiunt, cæcutiunt intelligentiæ." Lib. de Virg.

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scend any mere human intellect, and cannot be adequately described even by the most sublime intellect; yet as the abundance of the subject renders every tongue fruitful, we shall, full of confidence in her heavenly assistance, recount the admirable privileges which she received from God.

As those who on a frail bark, endeavoring to explore an immense ocean, can only touch certain points, so we can notice only the principal and best known of the privileges lavished on Mary: for we willingly adopt the opinion of some theologians, that God alone can know all the graces, all the favors, with which he enriched the fair soul of that privileged creature.

"God ought," says St. Bernard with the other Fathers, "to choose, or rather create a mother such as he knew would be suitable or pleasing to him." *

We have already, in previous chapters, seen how our dear and Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived without the original stain, and we have also said some few words on the superabundant grace which was given her at the very instant of her existence: let us now see more in detail the signal privileges with which this very plenitude of grace was accompanied.

First of all, there presents itself, that noble privilege which most theologians agree in attributing to the Blessed Virgin, namely, that her soul, to be capable of reason, did

* "Talem sibi ex omnibus debuit deligere, immo condere Matrem, qualem se decere sciebat et sibi noverat placituram." (Hom. II. super Missus est.) "Beata Virgo habuit actualem usum rationis in primo instantu conceptionis et sanctificationis suæ." (III. P. qu. 17. art. 6. Disp. 4. sect. 7.) On this question, see St. Bernardine of Sienna, Serm. 51. art. 1. ch. 2.—Peter Morales, lib. I. tr. 9. c. lxxvi.—Dionysius the Carthusian, I. De Laudibus Virginis.—Barradius, I. lib. VI. c. iv.—Vigerius, Gaetano, Viguera, and others much greater in numbers and authority than those who maintain the contrary opinion.

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not await the period usual to the children of Adam; but that she had scarcely come from heaven and been united to the body in her mother's womb, when she was capable of knowing her God, thanking him, and offering herself to him as a perpetual holocaust of love. Relying on the text of St. Bernard, the profound and illustrious Suarez writes:* "When there is question of grace and privileges, nothing can be conceded as granted to a saint, which cannot justly be attributed to the Blessed Virgin Mary: now some saints were endowed with reason at the very moment when they were sanctified in their mother's womb: we must then conclude that the Virgin Mary had the use of reason at the very instant of her Conception and sanctification."†

St. Thomas of Villanova gives as a certain and indubitable proof of the greatness of Mary, that if the Mother of God is infinitely above a servant of God,‡ it follows that Mary's privileges infinitely surpass the privileges granted to the other saints; but that if every privilege granted to a creature seems finite and limited, we will say with St. Augustine§ that what is not the right of the Mother, is the right of the Son she bore.

A no less beautiful privilege of our blessed Lady is, that she

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* The Fathers as well as theologians interpreting the passage of the Gospel: "And the child leaped in its mother's womb," believe not only that Elizabeth, as it is clearly said in the sacred text, but also the child was filled with the Holy Ghost, by prematurely receiving the use of reason. "He exulted," says St. Augustine, "from excessive joy; now no one will believe that this can happen but by the operation of the Holy Ghost." (Ep. 57.)

† Nihil unquam alicui sanctorum speciali privilegio concessum est quod a principio vitæ cumulatius non præfulgeat in Maria. (Serm. II. *de Assumpt.*) On which St. Bernard says: "Quod vel paucis mortalium constat esse collatum, non est fas suspicari Virgini fuisse negatum." (Epist. 174.)

‡ Matris Dei et servorum Dei infinitum esse discrimen. (Orat. II. *de Assumpt.*)

§ Si Mariæ non congruit, congruit filio quem genuit. (Serm. *de Assumpt.*)

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received the plenitude of all graces, in her first sanctification. This doctrine* of the angelic St. Thomas is the doctrine of all the Fathers of the Church. And, in fact, how could the Angel Gabriel call her *full of grace*, as St. Jerome observes,† unless this plenitude, which is given partially to other Saints, is entirely infused in Mary.

In the same way that all the waters which first form the deep lakes, the mighty river, the headlong torrent, the gentle stream, and limpid fountain, running over the face of the earth in various channels, over mountains, valleys and plains, empty and meet in the immeasurable bed of the ocean, so on the blessed soul of Mary, from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, fell in rich abundance the dew of grace, favors, gifts, privileges, prodigies, that dew which, divided in a different and ever new mode, descends from heaven in all ages, on the souls of the children of Adam.

The graces granted to the angels, are but drops compared to that superabundant plenitude which the very Author of grace poured into the fair soul of our august Queen. Hence the seraphic Doctor justly exclaims: "All gifts enter in Mary: the stream of the grace of the angels, the stream of the grace of the patriarchs and prophets, the stream of the grace of the apostles, martyrs, confessors, doctors, virgins; in fine, all the streams of grace enter Mary." ‡

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* Part. 3. quæst. 27. art. 5.

† Bene gratia plena dicitur, quia cæteris per partes præstatur, Mariæ vero se tota infudit plenitudo gratiæ. St. Jerome, or the author of the Sermon on the Assumption. With him agree perfectly St. Anselm. (*Lib. de excellen. Virg.*)—St. Peter Chrysologus. (Serm. III. *de Annuntiatione.*)—St. Basil. (*in Catena in* Cap. II. *Luc.*)—St. Ildephonsus. (Serm. IV. *de Assumpt.*)—St. Peter Damian. (Serm. III. *de Nativ.*)—Richard de St. Victor. (Lib. I. *de Laudibus Virg.*), and many others.

‡ Omnia charismata intrant in Mariam: flumen gratiæ angelorum intrat in Mariam, flumen gratiæ patriarcharum et prophetarum intrat in Mariam; flumen

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"And justly was it so," concludes the Angel of the schools; "for the more nearly any thing approaches the principle in its kind, the more it partakes of the effect of that principle. Now Christ is the principle of grace, he is the source of it as God, and the instrument of it as man; now the Blessed Virgin was so near Christ as to bear him in her womb, and become his mother. Hence she had by her son a unique and special grace, such as was never given to any creature." * At this consideration, we are forced to exclaim: O vast sea! O profound abyss of grace! object of admiration for earth and heaven!

And this plenitude of grace, which was poured forth on Mary at the very first instant of her Immaculate Conception, was, moreover, still greater and more intense than that of all angels, and men combined; because, say the Fathers and Doctors justly, the foundations of that mystic abode, which Divine Wisdom prepared for itself, were laid on the highest summits; and it was to the august Virgin that the prophet King alluded, when he chanted the inspired canticle: "O Sion! whose foundations are in the holy mountains, the Lord loveth thy gates above all the tabernacles of Jacob." †

St. Gregory says even more: "Mary," says he, "soaring

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gratiæ apostolorum intrat in Mariam; flumen gratiæ martyrum, confessorum, doctorum, virginum intrat in Mariam; omnia denique flumina intrant in Mariam. (*In Spec.* c. iii.)

* Quanto aliquid magis appropinquat principio in quolibet genere, tanto magis participat effectum illius principii. Beata Virgo qui propinquissima Christo fuit secundum humanitatem quia ex ea accepit humanam naturam. (Part. III. quæst. 27. art. 5.)

† Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis; diligit Dominus portas Sion super omnia tabernacula Jacob. (Psalm lxxxvi.) Many of the Fathers, it is true, interpret this psalm of the Church, but there are some who apply the first verse to Mary.

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above all the choirs of angels, rose to the very throne of the Divinity." *

St. Bernard, the holy abbot of Clairvaux, explaining the words of the Apocalypse,† "The moon under her feet," applies them to the Church, which, from the first moment of its existence, has been at the feet of our heavenly Queen. Hence it justly follows that she is above the Church itself. This does not seem exaggerated, for the Fathers explaining the passage of Ecclesiastes: "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea doth not overflow,"‡ generally understand it of the singular and superabundant plenitude of grace with which the soul of the Virgin was endowed. We might here cite many other testimonies from the holy Fathers; it will be enough, however, in order to carry evidence to the highest degree, to cite as to this glorious privilege, St. Bonaventure and St. Bernardine, both so devout to our august Queen. The former, to prove the immensity of the grace lavished on the Blessed Virgin, says: "An immense vessel can be filled only so far as what is poured in is immense. Who then could ever measure her immensity, who could contain in her womb him who is greater than the very heavens?" And the latter: "That a woman should conceive and bear a God, is the miracle of miracles. It was necessary that this woman should in a measure be elevated by an infinity of graces, to the divine perfection, which no creature ever reaches." §

* Meritorum verticem supra omnes angelorum choros usque ad solium divinitatis evexit. (C. II. *in* Lib. I. *Regum.*)

† Serm. *in Signum magnum.*

‡ Omnia flumina intrant in mare, et mare non redundat. (Eccles. i. 7.) St. Jerome remarks that some rabbins apply this verse to men, who return to the earth from which they came; some Fathers, however, apply it to the fulness of grace with which the august Mother of God was endowed.

§ St. Bonaventure, *in Spec.* c. v.—St. Bernardine, Serm. LXI. c. xvi. See note, p. 48.

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There were still other privileges which the God of goodness chose to grant to her who was to be one day raised to the unspeakable honor of being his Mother. At the very first instant she received the infused habit of all the theological and moral virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and all the other virtues which theologians call acquired, so that from the first instant, she was able to know and love God, far more than all the saints on earth united together could have done. Of this there can be no doubt, inasmuch as God was pleased to give his most Blessed Mother a sanctifying grace, which should, as we have seen, surpass that of all the saints taken collectively: "And how could it but be so?" exclaims the angelic St. Thomas. "If Adam had infused habits of all the virtues which constitute the state of innocence, must not Mary have had them in a still higher degree? If order," continues the same doctor, "cannot exist without one to ordain, and if virtues are only certain dispositions according to which reason is ordered with regard to God, and the inferior powers are disposed with regard to reason, we must certainly suppose in the Blessed Virgin not only an ordinary, but the most sublime order, and at the outset, we must admit infused habits of all virtue, in the most elevated degree." * This argument of the angelic Doctor is corroborated by these words of Suarez: "If Eve who, according to the flesh, was to be the Mother of all the living, received these habits, with far better reason should Mary receive them; Mary, who was to be, according to the spirit, the Mother of all the faithful."

By virtue, then, of this plenitude of graces, and infused habits, our august Lady had also the infused habit of science and wisdom: whence it came to pass, that in the course of

* Part. I. Quæst. 95. art. 3.

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her mortal life, she was never sullied by the least stain of even an indeliberate venial sin. Hence her devout client St. Bernardine of Sienna, teaching truly that the Blessed Virgin in her first sanctification received from God so many graces that she could, as she did, avoid every venial sin: which was certainly the case only because she had received the greatest wisdom to discern what she was to believe, do, or avoid.*

But, if to put the infused habits into act, Mary had to await the suitable time, it is still certain that she was not compelled to await the ordinary age of reason,† since she had reason in the very first instant of her Immaculate Conception as we have shown. The Fathers and theologians with unanimous voice accord to the Blessed Virgin all that our piety and her glory claim in her behalf. Now, who does not see that not only our piety claims for her the privileges which best evince God's goodness towards her, but her glory also, because, besides the grace which disposed her for the sublime dignity of mother of the Eternal Word, we must also recognize in our august Queen a merit conformable to the grace? It is, accordingly, the common opinion of theologians that Mary merited, at least *de congruo*, the divine maternity.

I will here in preference give the opinion of St. Bernardine, already cited, who affirms that the Blessed Virgin in her first

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* In prima sanctificatione in uteri matris suæ tantam recepit gratiam, qua omne peccatum etiam maximum et veniale vitare potuit, et omnino vitavit, quod quidem fieri non potuit, nisi maximam sapientiam acceperit omnium agendorum et vitandorum et credendorum. (St. Bernardine, *De Beata Virg.* Serm. VI. art. 3. c. iv. t. iii.)

† If at the age of three, Mary repaired to the temple to serve God alone, as is the common belief, it is certain that she performed an act far beyond her years. If we see some saints precociously endowed with grace, perform acts of virtue at the most tender age, still more could Mary do them.

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sanctification, was endowed with such intelligence that she perfectly understood all creatures, the Creator, the spirits, and all things to be done or avoided.*

Theologians here raise a subtile question to which we shall merely allude: they ask whether the Blessed Virgin, as Suarez and Vega maintain, was sanctified by her own disposition. We who are and ever will be disposed to attribute to our good mother the fairest privileges, whenever we can rest it on the authority of Fathers or illustrious doctors, do not hesitate to answer affirmatively: such is, moreover, the doctrine of St. Thomas.† According to the angelic Doctor, it is more perfect to be sanctified by a personal act, than by the act of another. Now, who is ignorant, that all that concerns the august Mother of God, took place in the most perfect manner? But even this is little: sanctification by the act of another, happens only, as schoolmen say, by accident, when reason is not yet mature. Now, have we not shown, that at the very instant of her Immaculate Conception, Mary was endowed with the plenitude of her reason? In a word, if the angels, if Adam and St. John the Baptist, were sanctified by their own disposition, as some maintain, can we refuse this privilege to the Virgin sovereignly blessed, to whom, as we have shown, the God of love gave with lavish hands and in superabundance as many graces as he ever gave to all the Saints of the Old and New Law?

From this sanctification, from this precocious use of reason, it follows that the Blessed Virgin knew and loved God,

* In prima sanctificatione quantum ad intellectum et rationem tanta ei sapientiæ claritas superfusa est, quod perfecte intelligebat creaturas, et Creatorem, et spiritus, et omnia bona amplectenda et mala fugienda. St. Antoninus, Albertus Magnus, and many other Doctors are of the same opinion. Suarez, Canisius de Vega, and many others confirm it.

† Part. III. quæst. 34.

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in her mother's womb, and that the most sublime mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation were revealed to her, in order that, exercised in the most perfect acts of virtues, she might be worthy to be the Mother of God. Nor is this enough: she must be exempt from the *fomes* of all concupiscence. Now concupiscence, which means inclination to evil, is, according to theologians, habitual or actual: and they teach that the *fomes* of sin or habitual concupiscence is not sin,* but incites to sin, and produces moreover a certain difficulty in well-doing, and that actual concupiscence is alone guilty. This distinction admitted, it is easy to reconcile in man sanctifying grace and habitual concupiscence. Nevertheless, in Mary habitual concupiscence was entirely extinguished; this was so, because it was proper that Mary should shine with a purity so great, that she should have above her only the essential purity of Christ. Now every one must see that it is a greater purity not to have the *fomes*, than to have it, however weak and subordinate it may be? † Moreover the perfect equilibrium between the flesh and the spirit, was natural in the state of innocence, and Adam and Eve enjoyed it before their sin. The revolt of the senses, and the *fomes* of sin are only the deplorable effects of the first fault. Now, Mary, as we have shown, was exempt from original sin; she must then have enjoyed the primitive and perfect obedience of the body to the soul, the senses to reason, which is equiv-

* Concupiscentia non peccatum est, sed ex peccato est, et ad peccatum inclinat. (*Conc. Trid.* Sess. V. c. v.)

† Between those who admit the fomes in subjection, and those who admit it entirely extinct, there is this difference, that the former, while excluding from the Blessed Virgin every mortal or venial fault, nevertheless ascribe to her the possibility of acts called first, while the latter wish it exempt from these acts. Now this latter opinion is much more conformable to the end which God proposed, namely, to fill the Blessed Virgin with the highest sanctity.

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alent to saying that she was entirely exempt from the *fomes*. Thus truly the future mother of Him who giveth grace could not be deprived of this admirable privilege. And besides this, at the first instant, she was confirmed in grace; so that she did not sin venially one single time in the whole course of her long life: of this there is no doubt; since, besides the unanimous consent of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in the Sixth General Council, it was defined "that the Virgin was exempt from all contagion, and all spot in body, soul and mind." * And this doctrine was confirmed by the Council of Trent, when it said: "If any one say that man can in his whole life avoid even venial sins, except by a special privilege, such as the Church holds of the Blessed Virgin, let him be anathema."† St. Thomas proves the doctrine thus: "Mary was divinely chosen to be the worthy mother of God."‡ Now for such a dignity it required impeccability; first, that the honor of the mother might redound on the child; secondly, that Mary might have especial affinity to Christ, who assumed from her his flesh and blood; "in fine, in order that, in a special manner, the Son of God, who is wisdom itself, might dwell in her." Now we know that wisdom does not enter a soul disposed to evil, and will not dwell in a body subject to sin? To admit then in Mary the least venial sin, even involuntary, would turn to the shame of her Divine Infant. And had she sinned even once, she would have been unworthy to be Mother of God. Thus all the privileges of Mary are deduced from the high and incomparable dignity of Mother

* This Council opened at Constantinople in 1680, and closed the following year.

† Si quis dixerit hominem posse in tota vita peccata omnia etiam venialia vitare, nisi ex speciali privilegio, quemadmodum de Beata Virgine tenet Ecclesia, anathema sit. (Sess. VI. can. 23.)

‡ Part. III. quæst. 27. art. 4.

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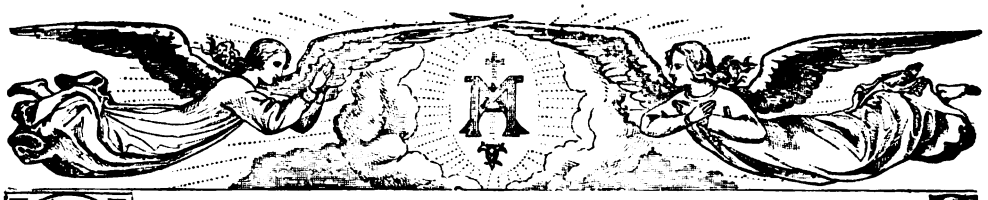
of the Divine Word, a dignity to which God had predestined her from all eternity.

The infinite abundance of the privileges with which the Blessed Virgin of Nazareth was gifted from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception, compels the most eloquent tongues on earth and in heaven to keep silence, and to avow themselves overcome by the grandeur of the subject. "This plenitude of grace," says the pious Suarez,* "perfectly corresponded to the dignity of Mother of God, because this dignity in its way is infinite, and by a natural consequence it communicates to Mary a certain infinity of grace, such as the human soul is incapable not only of expressing, but even of conceiving." And accordingly St. Anselm, St. Stephen, St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine, have preferred to observe a modest silence, and only say that it was not given to man's intellect to express or even understand the graces showered with open hands on the soul of Mary; and finally, calling the tongues of saints and angels inadequate to express them, they conclude that to understand and speak them was solely the work of the divine intelligence, because God had prepared them from all eternity and poured them into the soul of Mary, as in a closed vessel, in order to render it singular and unique.† Nevertheless after having, as far as

* Hæc tota gratiæ intentio et plenitudo optime convenit cum dignitate Matres Dei. Qua illa dignitas est altioris ordinis, et suo modo infinita. Unde etiamsi in infinitum illa gratia intenderetur, nunquam excederet terminos aut debitam proportionem ejus dignitatis.

† Immensitatem quippe gratiæ considerare incipienti sensus deficit, lingua fatis cit. St. Anselm.—Cui prædicando cælestis ac terrena lingua minime sufficit, imo nec angelorum. St. Epiphanius.—Quid dicam pauper ingenii? Cum de te quidquid dixero, minor laus est, quam tua dignitas meretur. St. Augustine.—Virgo sancta totam sibi hauserat Spiritus Sancti gratiam. St. Basil.—Immensa fuit gratia, qua ipsa plena est. St. Bernard.

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the weakness of our talents permits, related some of the sublime merits of our august Queen, it is due to cite here some words of St. Bernard: "God," says he, "wishing to ransom the human race, united the whole price in Mary. Why? In order that Eve might be justified by means of her daughter, or that in future the complaints of man against woman might be appeased, and that Adam might no longer say: 'The wo- that thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat:' but rather, 'The woman whom thou gavest me hath nourished me with her blessed fruit' . . . . Mary is that garden of delights, where the divine zephyr, the wind of heaven, blows, so that from every side exhale in abundance the sweet odors of grace. Take away the sun that illumines the world, day will no longer exist: so take away Mary, that star of the measureless sea, what will you find but the darkness and shades of death? Meditate then how in the plenitude of grace, she rose above the angels by the power of the Holy Ghost. If there is charity, purity, humility in souls, is there one of these virtues which is not effulgent in Mary? If the angel glories in being the Minister of the Most High, Mary has a greater glory since she is the Mother of God." *

Why did Mary thus have the fulness of grace? We shall answer with St. Thomas Aquinas, † that it was for three principal reasons: 1st. In order that she might be holy, as it became her who was to be the Mother of the Man God; 2d. In order that her soul, fully sanctified, might sanctify her

* In Nativ. B. V. M. Serm. de Aquæ ductu.

† Dicitur beato Virgo plena gratia quantum ad tria: primo quantum ad animam, in qua habuit omnem plenitudinem gratiæ . . . secundo plena fuit gratia quantum ad redundantiam animæ ad carnem vel corpus . . . ut de ipsa conciperet Filium Dei . . . tertio quantum ad refusiones in omnes homines . . . nam in omni periculo potes salutem obtinere ab ipsa Virgine gloriosa. (Opusc. 8.)



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body, from which the only Son of the Father was to assume flesh and blood; 3d. In order that she might be for all men an abundant and inexhaustible channel of graces and blessings.

On this stormy sea where the billows of the passions incessantly arise and threaten to swallow us up, we all have an utter need of God's graces. If we wish to obtain them certainly and abundantly, let us have recourse to Mary, our good Mother.



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CHAPTER IX.

BIRTH OF MARY.—HER NAME.

PRIOR to the moment when God founded the order of this universe the earth was shapeless and naked, and according to the expression of scripture, "darkness covered the face of the abyss." At the word of the Almighty: Let light be—that beautiful image of the divinity shone forth prompt and obedient. The Creator contemplated it, and, satisfied with his work, separated light from darkness.* By the sin of the first man darkness still more profound, and still more sad, covered the face of the earth. For more than forty centuries the children of Adam remained buried in the shadow of everlasting death. Amid the horrid shades of sin, the God of mercy, to announce to the earth its speedy deliverance, bid a new light arise, ardently desired—this was our dear and Blessed Virgin Mary, who was to bear to the world in the fulness of time the

* Genesis i. 2–4.

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Eternal Word, the Divine Redeemer of men. Mary, who already by a singular privilege had been conceived without the stain of sin, appeared at her birth all pure, and all fair to the eyes of her Lord; and God, on contemplating his work, again found it perfect, and decreed that the light should remain eternally separated from the darkness, that is to say, God confirmed her in grace, and rendered her impeccable.* And then was seen in her the fulfilment of the words of Isaias,† who speaking of Sion, the city of God, a beautiful figure of the Virgin, had exclaimed: "And thy God shall rejoice over thee."

It is a common opinion that Mary was born the eighth day of the month of September, which corresponds to the beginning of the month Tisri, that is to say, the first day of the civil year of the Jews, just when the smoke of the holocaust was rising to heaven in expiation for the sins of the people. And in this agree perfectly the Greek and Latin churches, whatever the illustrious Francisco Maria Fiorentini may say to the contrary.‡ That author seems disposed to

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* Lux dicitur illa benedicta generatio Virginis Mariæ, qua sine tenebris culpæ facta est. St. Vincent Ferrer. *Serm. de Nativ. Virg.*

† Et gaudebit super te Deus tuus. Isaias lxii. 5.

‡ See his notes on the Martyrology on the 8th of September. The Menology of St. Basil places the birth of the Blessed Virgin on the 8th of September. This date is also given in the Menology translated into Latin by Cardinal Sorleto, and published by Henry Canisius in his Thesaurus. The same thing is said in the edict of the Emperor Manuel Comnenus, which fixes the days for the various festivals. In the Nomocanon of Photius (*In Scholiis ad ut* VII.,) we read: "Natalis itaque dies purissimæ Dominæ ac Dei Genitricis, qui est octavus Septembris, feriatus est." We find the same day set down in many other Greek authors, as well as in the Latin. We shall cite only the sacramentary, attributed to Pope Gelasius, published by the blessed Cardinal Tommasi, in which this feast is mentioned on 8th (vi. idus) of September. And here, it is not amiss to say, that in the primitive ages of the Church, the feast of the Nativity of Mary was not celebrated,

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ascribe the birth of Mary to another day. Holding for certain that this "little pillar of smoke," as Ezechiel calls it, or this "light cloud," as Elias calls it, came to the light, in the year 3987 of the creation of the world,* we shall here give some pious opinions touching this happy birth, relying upon what some of the Fathers, Greek as well as Latin, tell us.†

Mary was born in autumn, when nature, more than in any other season, is wont to repay the toil of the husbandmen by giving them the ripened clusters. "Rejoice, O earth," says St. John Damascenus, "because from the womb of Anne, as from a fertile vine, has sprung a sweet ripe cluster. To the harvesting of this vineyard all are invited, none is excluded, it is the joy of all." Mary too is born in the autumn, even as Eve, who was the primal cause of man's prevarication, because it was proper that the new Eve, the mother of the Redeemer, should change tears into joy, at the same time in the year as the first Eve had changed joy into tears.

Mary was born on the 8th of September: she was then conceived on the 8th of December, that is to say, in the month when Christ was born to ransom the world. As the beatitudes are eight in number, this eighth day of the month when she was conceived, and born, was admirably chosen, since

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because the number of feasts was limited. Some think that this feast was introduced at the time of St. Augustine, because we read in the Office of that day, a homily of his on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. It seems, moreover, that this feast began to be celebrated solemnly about the eighth century. The holyday is now of obligation among the Greeks, and generally among the Latins. St. Bernard, on this solemnity, thus gives utterance to his feelings: "Ortum Virginis, didici in Ecclesia et in Ecclesia indubitanter haberi festivum atque sanctum, firmissime cum Ecclesia sentiens eam accepisse in utero ut sancta prodiret."

* See our former note as to the date of Mary's birth.

† See the Life of the Mother of God, by the Abate Dom Giovanni Sianda, and the Lezioni istorici e morale, of Father Thomas Francesco Rovere, ex-general of the Congregation of St. Paul.

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by her was the whole world to know all beatitude, and since by her, as mother of the Redeemer, were all the elect to be ushered into the glory of heaven, there to enjoy supreme felicity. She was born, as Luchesino remarks,* on the Sabbath, the day when God rested, to show that the human race, at the glorious birth of the Virgin, was to enjoy a real repose. Hence Saturday is a kind of festival especially consecrated to devotion to our august Lady

As to the hour of that fortunate day which beheld the birth of Mary, St. Peter Damian believes that it was at daybreak.† Others add, that the sun that day shone with a twofold light, and that on the night preceding her birth, the moon shone with an extraordinary brilliancy, almost like that of the sun, and that for some time, far from showing her usual spots, a refulgent star sparkled upon her disc.‡

But which is the city that had the supreme happiness of being her native place? Which was the fortunate soil that beheld her birth? where she first uttered her first feeble cry? Where did she open her eyes to the day? On this point historians do not agree, and we may say, that not without good reasons, four cities lay claim to this glory, namely; Jerusalem, Sephora or Diocæsarea, Bethlehem and Nazareth. In this there is nothing to astonish us. As cities often dispute with each other the advantage of having given birth to a person illustrious for sanctity, genius, or military glory, how much more

* Ephem. hist.

† St. Peter Damian, Sermo de Assumptione B. M. V.

‡ Secundum historicum Theophilum, ipsa die qua nata est Virgo, plus solito sol refulsit in duplum; et illa nocte clarior coruscavit, adeo quod pene solari splendore radiavit; et circa globum lunarum medium qua si una stella magna claritate apparuit. Pubert, Book V. pt. 1. art. 2. See also Pelbarti, "Pomerium Sermonum, seu stellarum coronæ B. V. M." Bk. V. pt. 2. c. ix., near the end.—Saliseto, Mariale Teorico, "On the Birth of Mary," p. 64.

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natural is it the case with regard to the august Virgin, who, consider her under what aspect we please, rises above all creatures.

Theophylact and Metaphrastes maintain that Mary was born in Bethlehem; and the learned Salmeron is of the same opinion. On the contrary, Poza, Cupero, and other authors of high rank, insist that she was born in the city of Diocæsarea. Some think that as Joachim had a house at Jerusalem, Anne must have born her only child at Jerusalem; and among these writers, there are some who go further, and affirm that the house of the blessed parents of Mary was situated not far from the celebrated Probatica. Novati writes as follows: "It well became the Virgin who was to be the 'health of the weak,' to be born near the pool where infirmities were healed, in order that by her it might be more easy for us to receive health of soul and body.*

Moreover, as these opinions do not rest on opinions, which it is impossible to contradict, we willingly subscribe the opinion of those who maintain that Mary was born at Nazareth. In fact, according to the testimony of different historians, it is clear that Joachim, although he had a house in another city, yet resided ordinarily at Nazareth. From Nazareth he set out with Anne for the temple of Jerusalem. After it was revealed that she should become fruitful, they returned to Nazareth. It is reasonable, then, to conclude that Mary was born there, especially as we read that this holy couple came from Nazareth, to present their blessed daughter in the temple in fulfilment of their vow. Moreover, it is very probable that Mary, after becoming the spouse of Joseph, continued to live in her own city; because it was not the custom for young Jewesses, except for grave reasons, to leave their native place;

* See TROMBELLI, Dissertation V.

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and men of humble condition, such as Joseph was, were not accustomed to solicit in marriage strange maidens. We read, moreover, in the gospel, that Mary and Joseph resided at Nazareth: "And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary." *

This opinion that Nazareth was the birthplace of the Blessed Virgin, is maintained by almost all; it is moreover confirmed by the authority of the Bollandists: "If," they say, "it is permitted to reason by conjectures, and to seek how it came to pass that the Virgin and her spouse resided at Nazareth, while they regarded Bethlehem as their city, we believe that we can say with a greater show of probability, that Joachim and Joseph, both born of an illustrious family, after losing their property in Judea, if indeed any had descended to them from their ancestors by inheritance, retired to Galilee from a feeling of shame. There Joseph began to live by the labor of his hands, and Joachim, with the little money he had left, bought some property; his affairs prospered, and he was soon able to purchase a house in Nazareth, and marry a wife of his own or another tribe, but probably of that of Levi, which was already scattered in all the cities; that is to say, espouse Anne, who was of the priestly race." †

We shall here also mention that Nazareth is frequently named in Holy Writ as the city of Mary and Joseph. In St. Luke we read: "And when they had performed all things

* Luke i. 26, 27.

† On the 20th of March, when the feast of St. Joachim was celebrated. The festival of this saint is now fixed on the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption.

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according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee into their city Nazareth, and the child grew," &c.* At the end of the book *De Locis Hebraicis*, we read that there is a spot at Nazareth held in great veneration as the birthplace of the Blessed Virgin. We also read in the same book that "Nazareth possesses a church erected on the very spot where the angel brought the divine message to Mary, and another church in the spot where Our Lord was brought up." Bede speaks of these two churches in almost identical terms.† This being so, we cannot but believe that the house where the infant Jesus was brought up, was Joseph's, and that where the Annunciation took place, the house of the Blessed Virgin. According to this, it would seem, as we have said, that Mary, following the custom of Jewish women, continued after her marriage to reside there with Joseph.‡

In Nazareth, then, which signifies "city of flowers," was born, amid the joy of her mother and the angels who hovered around her, the Virgin who is called the fair Rose of Jericho. We need not say how the happy parents of Mary rejoiced when they saw their desire accomplished, and their vows heard. The incomparable daughter whom God granted them, filled them with a joy the greater as her privileges were more sublime, since she was already chosen in the divine councils, to

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* Luke ii. 39. † De locis Sanctis, c. xvi.

‡ The Jews married very young; the young men at the age of thirteen, the girls immediately after the age of puberty, might contract marriage; the latter did not appear in public before. The moment a maiden was promised she became a spouse. She did not ordinarily at once cohabit with her spouse, although she might see him freely. If during that time she was unfaithful, she might be punished by force of the law. We shall speak of the marriage rites of the Jews in the second book of this work, when we treat of the marriage of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph; and in the chapter on the Annunciation, we shall see whether the house of Mary is that which was transported to Dalmatia, thence to Loretto.

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be the Mother of the Saviour of the World. With what love did the holy pair welcome and regard that child blessed by heaven. For, illumined by the light of God, they understood well the incomparable gift which they had received from the divine goodness. "Happy parents;" shall we say with St. John Damascenus, "happy parents, you have brought into the world a Virgin who will one day be the mother of God."*

Although this child was descended on her father's side from the royal family of David, and on her mother's, from the priestly family of Aaron, and was, moreover, destined to be the mother of the only Son of God, nothing great in the eyes of men marked her birth in her father's house. Abjection, poverty, humility, silence, contempt of the world, alone formed her cortege. But this birth could not but be, in the eyes of faith, a beautiful and joyous spectacle, for angels and for heaven, because it germed like a fragrant lily amid thorns. She was born not only without sin, but also adorned and enriched with all virtues, different from the other children of Adam, who all come into the world children of wrath and sin, and enemies of God. Mary is the only one who, under the apparent miseries and weaknesses common to all men, conceals the most precious treasures of divine benediction, and was loaded with all the graces of the Holy Ghost from the first instant of her life. We may then justly say, that at Mary's birth a new light seemed to arise on the Jews; for like the first Esther she was joy and honor for all.† In Mary germed on earth that long-desired flower of the fields, from which was to rise the lily of the valley, Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Holy Fathers speak with rapture, and in the

* Virginem enim Dei matrem peperistis.

† Judæis autem nova lux oriri visa est, gaudium, honor et tripudium. Esth. viii. 16.

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most magnificent terms that eloquence can inspire, of the birth of this august child. "The heavenly choirs," says St. Augustine, "chant full of joy, and the sweet tones of heaven's harps are blended with their voices. . . . The miracle of the new childbirth has overcome the cause of sin." *

St. John Damascenus cries joyfully: "Yes, by Mary's birth the human race has been restored, by it the sadness caused by Eve is changed into a perfect joy." † St. Bernardine of Sienna, speaking of the birth of Mary, observes joyfully, "that heaven made earth an inestimable present;" ‡ and the Abbot Rupert says: "The nativity of the Virgin is the end of sorrow and the beginning of joy."§

In fact, at the birth of that august child, the desired aurora rose upon the earth, messenger of the true sun of justice. Hence it comes that the Holy Fathers emulously, so to speak, seek analogies between Mary and the dawn. The dawn, they say, placed between day and night, is the termination of the night which ends upon it, and the principle of the day which begins on it. The dawn calls the mechanic and farmer from repose to labor, from sleep to toil; and Mary's birth awakens the saints from their repose, for they are no longer retained in the bosom of Abraham to contemplate

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* Serm. VIII. de Sanctis (II. de Annunt.)

† St. John Damascenus already cited.

‡ Pretiosum hodie munus cœlum nobis largitum est.

§ On this mystical resemblance between Mary and the dawn, a poet has made this ingenious distich:

Solem ambo pariunt Aurora et Virgo; sed ista
Solem viva parit; dum parit illa, perit.

In fact the sun is born of the dawn, but the dawn dies in giving birth to the sun. Jesus is born of Mary, but at the birth of Jesus Mary receives a fairer life. This mystic aurora invites men to chant a hymn of joy, as the natural aurora invites the birds of the air to intone their harmonious warblings.

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the promises, but called to reveal to the world the coming of the Redeemer, to publish the law, to scatter the gospel seed.

The first of these saints, as we see in Scripture, was St. John the Baptist, the precursor of our Lord. Justly then does the Church chant: "Thy nativity, O Virgin Mother of God, brings joy into the whole world, because thou hast brought forth to the earth the sun of justice, Jesus Christ, our God;" and here St. Bernardine exclaims: "Yes, this day is the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, of whom the Saviour of the world chose to be born, in order that those who were born to death might be born again to life. She was born on this day, a new Eve: by the fault of our first mother, men fell under the scourge of the ancient malediction: by the second, they have inherited benediction." *

Among the many reflections which St. Augustine makes on the first book of Genesis against the Manicheans, he compares the six ages of the world to the six days of creation: light and darkness, he says, created on the first day, prefigure the original justice which followed the dark night of sin in the first age of the world. The firmament created between the waters, prefigures the ark amid the deluge, and the division of tongues. The earth separated from the waters, producing flowers and fruit, represents the Jewish nation separated from all other nations by circumcision, and producing flowers and fruit by the grace preserved in it. The sun, moon, and stars, created on the fourth day, prefigure the prophets, kings, and faithful people. The fifth day represents the Hebrews and Gentiles plunged into idolatry. The sixth day, when man was created, represents the birth of Christ, the desire of the nations and of the everlasting hills; but the Messias was to be born of Mary; then Mary was also impatiently expected,

* Sermo I. de Nativitate B. M. V.



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and the age in which she appeared in the world was the most glorious.

The Fathers, doctors, and theologians emulate each other in extolling the glories and wonders of that holy nativity, the most glorious ever seen on earth, next to that of our Lord Jesus Christ, because the maternity of Anne filled the august Trinity with joy and hell with terror.*

In the preceding chapter we have spoken at sufficient length of the privileges of Mary's soul; we shall now see how those of her body correspond to these sublime privileges. St. John Damascenus, speaking of the bodily beauty of the Blessed Virgin, says that in her were blended all the graces and beauties which nature can bestow on a human maiden;† and Gerson adds, that Mary combined in her all the beauties scattered in the fairest creatures.‡ Beauty of body, St. Ambrose remarks, reveals a beautiful soul. Mary, then, who was predestined to be the mother of God, was to be endowed with singular beauty, in order that we may conclude how beautiful was the soul which animated so beautiful a body.§ Genebrard assures us that Jesus, in bodily form, resembled his mother.‖ Now according to the Holy Scriptures Jesus was

* In the revelations of St. Matilda (L. xiv.), we read that at the birth of Mary the Holy Trinity "exulted so, that from the abundance of His joy, heaven and earth and all creatures, unwittingly exulted." In the revelations of St. Bridget we are told that the devils said to each other: "Lo, a certain Virgin is born, what shall we do? For something of an admirable future is visible in her. If we spread before her all the nets of our malice, she will burst them like flax." St. Bridget, who lived from 1302 to 1373, left a whole volume of revelations, divided into eight books, which were approved by the Fathers of the Council of Basle, after the examination, which by order of the same Council, was made by Cardinal John Torquemada, Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace.

† Orat. de Nativitate.

‡ Alph. 82. lett. A.

§ Lib. II. de Virg.

‖ Genebrard in Psalm xliv.

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the fairest of the children of men:* it follows, therefore, that Mary was the fairest of Virgins: and this beauty was only an apparent veil, through which all her virtues appeared; and her soul, the noblest and holiest of creatures, revealed itself in her looks.†

Some have discussed the question whether the Blessed Virgin at her birth was intrusted to the care of an angel. Passing over the scholastic controversy as to whether every man has a particular angel appointed to guard him, or whether several men are placed under the protection of a single angel, we say that it is admitted that Christ alone had the privilege of having no guardian angel, because in him the divinity was hypostatically united to the humanity: with St. Ildephonsus, St. Bernard, St. Lawrence Justinian, with many other Fathers and theologians, and especially with the most profound and pious Suarez, we say again that Mary had as a guardian one of the most elevated in the order of angels, a spirit reserved from all eternity for the guardianship of the Blessed Virgin.‡

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* Psalm xliv.

† Novati admits as probable, what some have written, namely: that the body of the Blessed Virgin was so perfect, that it exhaled the sweetest odors, applying literally to her that passage of Ecclesiasticus: "I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatic balm," (xxiv. 20.); and he cites the testimony of St. Dionysius Areopagita, who, as Ferreol tells us, (Lib. V. de Maria Aug. c. vi.) having had the happiness of seeing the Blessed Virgin, wrote that her body exhaled an odor of heavenly sweetness.

‡ Avila (in Matt. xvii.) says that it is probable that Mary, as a private person, had at her birth to watch over her the first of the guardian angels; and that after her Conception of the Divine Word, when the principle of the great work of Redemption rested on her, the Archangel Gabriel was united to the first angel. On which St. Bonaventure, considering the words of St. Luke: "Do not believe that Mary was then deprived of the guardianship of angels, because Gabriel departed from her in the visible form which he had assumed." St. John Damascenus, (Orat. I. de Nativ. Virg.) says that the Divine Wisdom gave Mary the Evangelist

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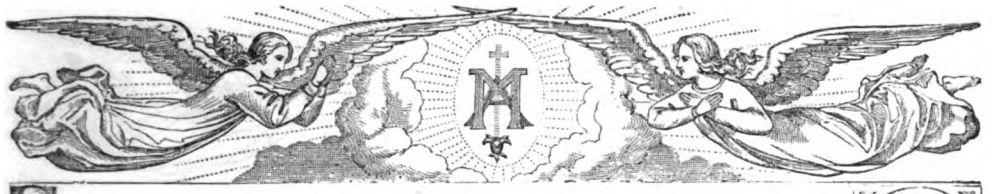
This guardian could not, inasmuch as she was impeccable, discharge in her regard all the duties which other angels do for the unhappy children of Adam committed to their care; but he could at least ward off from her all evils and dangers, by enlightening her soul; he could in this young virgin acknowledge, serve, and honor her who was chosen to be the Mother of God.* And in fact what need have little children, just come into the world, to be guarded by angels, except to shield them from danger from without? Yet it is the common opinion that children are from birth confided each to an angel's care. Let us conclude then that Mary was not only not deprived of this celestial guardian, but also that a legion of angels watched over her day and night, from the instant of her conception, and that this heavenly troop, ever on the alert to protect her, never after left her side, as St. Bernardine of Sienna affirms, as it was revealed to St. Bridget,† and as we love to repeat for the honor of our august Queen.

St. John to guard her and provide for her bodily wants, and the Archangel Gabriel to guard her and meet the wants of her soul.

* The same Avila says that the guardianship of the angels over Mary was not useless, inasmuch as to act holily requires not only intrinsic means, that is, graces and infused virtues, but also extrinsic means, among which is the guardianship of the angels, who aid us by persuading, enlightening, and exciting to good. St. Bonaventure uses the following language: Et si beneficium ipsi impenderent, propter infirmitatem carnis, cultus tamen reverentiæ ipsi exhibebant tanquam mater Dei. (In Cap. I. *Lucæ.*) Although they rendered her a service in consequence of the weakness of the flesh, yet they paid her the homage of reverence, as Mother of God.

† Assistebant illi innumerabiles multitudines angelorum in ejus protectionem; pie enim creditur quod plurimas legiones angelorum habuit ad custodiam et protectionem suam; cum et Eliseus, ut legitur (4 Reg. vi.) angelorum multitudinem habuerit ad sui defensionem. (St. Bernardinus Senenis in Bibliotheca Patrum XX.) Countless multitudes of angels stood around to protect her, for it is piously believed that she had several legions of angels for her guard and protection, since Eliseus, as we read, had a multitude of angels for his defence.—"Facto autem

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O wonder! "if sixty warriors," we will exclaim with St. Bonaventure, "guarded the bed of Solomon, can we doubt that a far greater number of celestial guardians watched over Mary, that living bed in which, for nine months, reposed the very Son of God?" *

Some days after the birth of this blessed child, her joyful parents gave her the name of Mary.† The Fathers and writers unanimously affirm that this august name had been revealed by God himself to Anne and Joachim. St. Bonaventure adds that God himself pronounced that glorious name,‡ and St. Jerome says that the angel who consoled the blessed couple in their sterility, commanded them to call by that name the blessed daughter that was to be born of them.§

Finally, several reasons of propriety induce us to say that this most sweet name of Mary was given to the Blessed

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corpore meo, Deus a Divinitate sua animam creatam immisit corpore, et mox anima cum corpore sanctificata est quam angeli custodiebant die ac nocte." (Sancta Brigitta, Revel. I. c. ix). My body having been formed, God infused into my body a soul created by his Divinity, and presently my soul and body were sanctified, and angels watched my soul night and day.

* St. Bonaventure in Cap. I. Lucæ.

† Some say that the imposition of the name took place the eighth day after the birth. Yet we cannot fix the day with certainty, because the Scriptures do not say whether the name was given to girls as to boys on that day.

‡ Benedictum sit gloriosum nomen, quod os Domini mirabiliter nominavit. St. Bonaventure, Psaltery. Blessed be the glorious name, which the mouth of the Lord wonderfully pronounced.

§ Uxor tua pariet tibi filiam et vocabis nomen ejus Mariam—Missus sum ad te, Anna, ut annuntiam filiam nascituram, quæ Maria vocabitur, et super omnes mulieres erit benedicta.—Thy wife shall bear thee a daughter, and thou shalt call her name Mary—I am sent to thee, Anna, to announce a daughter to be born of thee, who shall be called Mary, and who shall be blessed above all women. See St. Epiphanius, Oratio de Præsentatione Mariæ Virginis.—St. Ambrose, Lib. II. in Lucam.—St. Peter Damian, Sermo II. de Annuntiatione.



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Virgin by the express command of God. If, as the holy abbot of Clairvaux says,* all the privileges granted to the other Saints are found in Mary in a supereminent degree, can we say that this beautiful name was not imposed by a command from heaven, when, in the sacred pages, we read that the parents of Ismael, Isaac, and St. John the Precursor, received orders to call their wonderful children by those names?

Moreover, if we believe that God gave names to these predestined children, in order to mark, as the angelic Doctor says,† the grace with which they were adorned at birth, and the greatness and glory of those who bore the name, no one can doubt but that God named her who was predestined from all eternity to be the Mother of his only Son. "The name of Mary," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "announces the greatness of the Virgin." ‡

The Holy Fathers find in the sacred name of Mary, three significations, each of which corresponds with the glory to which God had destined her. First, the name of Mary signifies "the sea," and, in that sense, it symbolizes not only the graces with which the Almighty endowed her, but also the misfortune which man experiences in withdrawing from that sea. "Every grace," cries St. Bonaventure, "enters in Mary: the grace of foresight which enriches the prophets, the apostle's grace of zeal, the martyr's grace of constancy, the virgin's grace of purity, all are found superabundantly in Mary; and as earth far from the sea is arid, so souls which stray from this august Queen cannot produce fruits of life." § St. Peter Damian says: "No one can be saved without the help of

* Epistola 174 ad Canon. Lugdunens. † In Epist. ad Rom. 48.
‡ Dignitas Virginis annunciatur ex nomine.
§ In Spec. c. III.

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Mary." * But, besides signifying sea of graces, this name also signifies "sea of bitterness." Who, as we shall see, ever had in her life greater bitterness than the holy Mother of God? Is she not saluted by nations under the title of Queen of Sorrows? Is there a hardship, a pain, an affliction, a grief from which Mary was exempt? Was there ever a person in history or fiction, who suffered more than this daughter of Sion? Ah! as Jeremias says: "she was like a raging sea agitated by the most furious tempests." †

Finally this beautiful name also signifies "Sovereign," "Illuminated," and "Illuminatrix." ‡ And Mary, as we have seen, beyond all doubt knew God from the first moment of her conception, and during the nine months that she bore him in her womb, she received from him so great a light of grace, that she merited to be called the "illuminatrix" of the Church, who guards as a treasure all her words recorded in the gospel. The word Mary is like a heavenly manna, containing an exquisite savor; and, to leave metaphors, it is a profound instruction on the everlasting life. The angel of the schools compares Mary, illuminated and illuminating, to the moon and sun. In fact the sun shines in the heavens by its own light, so that the eye cannot gaze upon it with impunity; with its quickening rays it enlightens the world, and penetrating into the bowels of mountain and valley, earth and sea, it fructifies, nourishes and quickens all that exists; and when, in its course, it refuses at certain hours its light to one part of the world, it darts its rays on the moon, which illuminated by it reflects its light on the darkened hemis-

* Sermo de ssumptione.

† Lamentations ii. 13.

‡ Convenienter Maria vocatur illuminata in se, et illuminatrix in alios, quantum ad totum mundum; ideo assimilatur soli et lunæ.

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phere, thus comforting and rejoicing men, who, but for her, would be plunged in darkness.

Thus, these two luminaries admirably figure what Mary's name expresses, "illuminated" and "illuminating!" O blessed name! O glorious name! thou dost express all that is grand in sanctity, in merit, and in glory, and mortals can never sufficiently praise and bless thee!

What other name after the most sweet name of Jesus, is more worthy of our respect and love? What other can better excite our confidence and admiration? Can we be astonished that the Church has wished it particularly honored,* and that the Saints have always had such love for this holy name, and have written such admirable things to excite us to love it? "That august name, which, as St. Ambrose assures us, signifies also 'God is of my blood,'† is the key of the gate of paradise to him who invokes it," says St. Ephrem.‡

St. Anthony of Padua says, that this most sweet name is "honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and joy in the heart."§ St. Anselm adds: "There is neither misfortune

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* The Church celebrates the feast of the name of Mary, on the Sunday within the octave of the Nativity. This feast, although more ancient, was established in the Church by pontifical decree of Pope Leo X. in 1513, in the city and diocese of Cuenza in Spain. Suspended by St. Pius V., it was restored by Sixtus V., through the influence of Cardinal Deza. From Spain it passed to other countries; Innocent VI., by a decree in the year 1683, directed the office of the name of Mary to be recited throughout the Catholic world, in memory of the deliverance of Vienna, when besieged by the Ottoman army.

† *De Inst. Virg.* c. v. ‡ *De prec. ad Virg.*

§ St. Anthony of Padua attributed to the name of Mary the same effects as St. Bernard did to the name of Jesus. "The name of Jesus," said the latter, "the name of Mary," said the former, "is joy in the heart, music in the ears, honey in the mouth." In fact, what a flame of charity and what unspeakable sweetness filled the saints at the mere name of Mary, St. Bernard, St. Bernardine

nor danger from which this name does not preserve." * So terrible is it to the demons, that on merely hearing it they fly in terror; it is so sweet to devout souls, that they find untold joy and delight in hearing and uttering it.

"The name of Mary," says St. Bernard, "name which signifies Star of the sea, is perfectly applicable to the Blessed Virgin. Mary is compared to the star, because, as the star transmits its light without sullying its rays, so the Virgin remained intact in bearing the Eternal Word. The ray takes naught away from the beauty of the star, nor does the Son from the purity of His Mother. This star is more noble than Jacob's, for its ray enlightens the whole world; its effulgence shines in heaven and penetrates to the very abyss of hell; by shining on earth, it warms the souls of men, it favors virtue and consumes vice. It is the beautiful and radiant star which shines above this immense sea. O you, whoever you are, who are tossed on this stormy ocean, raise your eyes to this star if you would escape shipwreck. When the adverse winds of temptation blow, amid shoals, tribulations, pride, ambition, slander, raise your eyes to Mary. If the remembrance of your sins afflicts you, if remorse besets you, if the rigors of the judgment terrify you, despair not, go to Mary. Have her name ever on your lips and in your heart; to obtain her protection, imitate the example of her virtues. Walking in her steps you cannot err; praying to her you are sure to obtain; thinking of her you will not fail. If Mary supports you, you shall not fall; if she guides, you shall reach your heavenly country." †

Never has it been heard that any one invoked in vain the

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of Sienna, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bonaventure, St. Alphonsus Liguori, Blessed Henry Suso, and others, can tell.

* De excellentia Virg. † Hom. II. super Missus est.



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holy name of Mary.* To have this on the lips is a sign of salvation; as breathing is a certain sign of life, so Mary's name on our lips is not only a sign of life, but a means of obtaining everlasting life. Let the sweet name of Mary, then, be our last word, the last movement of our tongues, in order that, on leaving the world, we may, like the dove which bore in its beak a green branch of the olive tree, soar in the bosom of God to the abode of eternal rest.



* Memorare, piissima Maria, a sæculo non auditum esse quemquam ad tua præsidia confugientem esse derelictum. St. Augustine. Remember, O most benign Mary, that it is unheard of from ages that any one flying to thy patronage was ever abandoned.—Sileat misericordiam tuam, Virgo beata, qui in necessitatibus te invocatam meminerit defuisse. St. Bernard. Let him be silent as to thy merciful compassion, O blessed Virgin, who ever invoked thee in his hour of need and found thee wanting.—Quis invocavit eam et non est auditus ab ipsa? Pope Innocent III. Who ever invoked and was not heard?—Citius cœlum et terra perierint, quam Maria aliquem se implorantem sua ope destituat. Blosius. Sooner will heaven and earth perish, than Mary deprive of her aid any one who implores her.

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CHAPTER X.

CHILDHOOD OF MARY AND HER PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

OBJECT of God's delight, Mary had scarcely come into the world, when she became the admiration of angels and men. Daughter of benediction, grace and miracle, she appeared like a lily radiant with purity, whose beauty Jesus praises, and which, to use the expression of St. Bernard, gives the perfume of hope. Like a noble plane tree, she grew by the stream of the divine graces. It is past all doubt, that Mary, impeccable from the very instant of her conception, endowed with the perfect use of reason, and enriched with a great light corresponding to the grace with which she had been adorned, began immediately after her birth to put into acts the virtues of which she had the infused habit.

We shall first speak briefly, as best we may, of the virtues of her childhood and then of her Presentation in the temple.

It is a pious and generally received opinion, that the au-

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gust child began in the first months to abstain from milk some days in the week.* Although this is denied by some, Nicephorus maintains it, and gives this proof: "If different saints,† on certain days of the week, voluntarily abstained from milk, certainly the Virgin, destined to be the Queen of Saints, did so, choosing in every action what was most agreeable to God." This opinion is confirmed by the authority of Fulbert: he relates that it was revealed to Felix, a hermit of Thebais, that the Blessed Virgin, as a babe, abstained certain days of the week. We may further add that Mary, by her gift of intelligence and perfect will, knowing the privileges and advantages of fasting, practised it spontaneously at an early period. Otherwise we should say that she admired virtues without practising them, which is repugnant to all that is said elsewhere.

It is also a pious belief, that the Blessed Virgin was weaned sooner than other children ordinarily are,‡ and that

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* See Poza, *Elucid. Mar.* Book III. tract. 13. c. vii.—Nicephorus, Book I. c. vii.—De Castro, *Hist. Deiparæ*, Preface.—Fulbert, *en II. Math.*—Francis Ximenes, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Book I. ch. xxvii.

† Dorlando relates in his Chronicle, that St. Stephen refused milk every Friday. Methodius, Metaphrastes, and St. Lawrence Justinian say, that St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra, would never suckle on Wednesday and Saturday. Peter Natalis relates that Sisinnius took milk only once a day, on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; and Gretser adds, that John Ferino also suckled only once on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.

‡ St. Jerome relates that in ancient times children were weaned only at the age of five years; this opinion is supported by several writers, as he says, some have even thought, and it seems credible, that they were weaned by their mothers only at the age of twelve years. Moreover, we read in the second book of Macchabees (vii. 17), these words of a mother to a son: "My son, have pity upon me who bore thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years." And in the second book of Paralipomenon (xxxi. 16), it is said that the portion of bread and wine was to be given to the sons of the priests, "from three years old and upwards." Hence it is generally believed that Jewish mothers generally nursed their children for three years.

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of herself she soon ceased to present her lips to her mother's breast. Hence some have been led to believe that she wished to hasten, as far as in her lay, the longed-for hour, when she could retire to the temple whither the voice of her heavenly Bridegroom invited her to consecrate herself interiorly to him.

We know too little what were in her first years the impulses of her love for God, what was the fervor of her vows and prayers, the ardor of the divine fire which consumed her heart; we know not the value, merit, and number of multiplied acts of her heroic virtues; but we believe that we are in the truth, when we say with St. Anselm * that Mary had, from the first instant, as much love for God as any other creature had or will have, inasmuch as that dear child had laid the foundations of her ardent love, where other creatures lay the crowning pinnacle of their highest sanctity.

According to this, if so many illustrious souls in the law of grace have, from the cradle, given so many exterior signs of uncommon sanctity, can we have any difficulty in believing that Mary did not await the ordinary age to express to God the praises and thanks which she had offered him in her heart at the very moment of her conception? And then we see her move over the ground, with the still unsteady step of infancy, to choose beneath her father's roof, a retired spot to pray devoutly, and pour out her soul before God. Smiling, sweet and modest, dignified in her demeanor, wise in all her actions, Mary appears to us as a prodigy of perfection, or, according to the expression of Sophronius, like the delightful garden of her Creator.

Thus exempt by grace from all earthly affection, from every revolt of the senses, free from every tie, she kept her eyes and heart constantly turned to God: and in him, as

* Del Excellentia Virg.

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towards her centre, she soared with the flight of the amorous dove, and loved him with an immense and daily increasing love. God even, the better to rear his "all fair," his "well beloved," yet a child, opened the inexhaustible treasures of the divine virtues, and poured them in torrents into the soul of Mary, in order that she might ascend to an unheard of and prodigious sanctity, as became her who was predestined from all eternity to be the Mother of the only Son of God.

The enviable parents ever felt an inward emotion when contemplating their wonderful daughter, and acknowledging in her the fruit of heavenly benedictions, they rivalled each other in piety; the neighbors, relatives, domestics, always regarded her with complacency, not knowing which most to admire—her chaste beauty, or her prodigious virtue, which in spite of her efforts, shone forth in her countenance; and all thought that so extraordinary a child was destined to great and sublime things. Soon after, the parents were fully persuaded of it, when, as some think,* Mary asked to be conducted to the temple, to be brought up there with the other young maidens.

This was, doubtless, the object of all the desires of Mary, who felt herself more and more called to solitude by the voice of her well-beloved. The temple built by Solomon on the summit of a mountain in the city of Sion, passed for one of the wonders of the world. Nothing equalled the magnificence of that masterpiece of art.

At the extremity of the temple rose an edifice still more rich and adorned, called the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant was guarded with the greatest venera-

* St. Germanus of Constantinople, St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, cited by St. Alphonsus Liguori (Glories of Mary, Disc. iii on the Present.), are of the same opinion.

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tion. There had been erected the altar, near which was the golden candlestick of seven branches. Fifteen mysterious steps* led up to the sanctuary, around which rose the dwellings of those destined to the service of the house of the Lord, that is to say, of the priests, Levites, widows, and virgins. These habitations were divided into different apartments, according to the rank of each. By the sumptuous style of the vestibules, we may judge of the magnificence of the temple, to the construction of which great sums had been devoted. Priests alone had access to the interior vestibule; the people assembled in the second, the sexes, however, apart. The porch of the first entrance was left to the Gentiles and unclean Jews. If, after the Babylonian captivity, the temple, as rebuilt by Zorobabel, could not equal the splendor and magnificence of the former, it at least preserved its form and size.

We know from Josephus, the Jewish historian, that the cloister set apart for the virgins, was divided into ninety cells, where the young maidens were brought up with the greatest care. There, hidden from the eyes of men, under the direction of discreet women, they learned all the employments suited to their age and condition. By interior galleries they passed at certain hours into the temple to be present at the

* Some think that these fifteen steps corresponded to the fifteen states of the blessed, or the nine choirs of the angels, and those of the saints, namely: the patriarchs, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, whose virtues have been propagated by Mary. Others maintain that on these steps were chanted the Gradual Psalms; but this is doubtful, as neither the Bible nor Josephus state the number of steps in Solomon's temple. Ezechiel mentions fifteen, seven of which led to the vestibule of the women, and eight to that of the men. Josephus says, that the second temple had a still greater number: fourteen led from the porticos to the women's vestibule, fifteen from the latter to that of the men, and thence twelve more led into the temple; but this is equally doubtful.

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prayers and sacrifices: then the chief care of the virgins was confided to the high priest.

Among the Jews, presentation in the temple might take place at two epochs, as we see in the sacred pages of the Old Testament; first, by the law inscribed in Leviticus,* a woman who had borne a child was ordered to present it in the temple forty days after her delivery, if it was a son, and eighty if a girl, and to offer for a holocaust, as a legal expiation, a lamb, and a dove or pigeon. But if the mother was poor, she was required to offer only a pair of doves or pigeons. This ceremony was called the "Presentation of the child in the temple," and relatively to the mother, the "Purification." We have nothing to show us how Anne fulfilled this law; yet from her tried piety, we cannot but believe that she fulfilled it strictly. But it is useless to dwell longer on these two kinds of presentation, inasmuch as they do not concern our subject.

From the giving of the Mosaic law, it was customary with the Jews to consecrate themselves to God, and to make vows of consecrating their children to him for a time, or irrevocably for ever, reserving the power of ransoming them by offerings made to God or by sacrifices. We read, indeed, that Anne,† wife of Elcana, bound herself before God by such a vow, and really consecrated to him the son whom she had besought, and who was the prophet Samuel. We know also by the Holy Scriptures that Josaba,‡ daughter of King Joram, sister of Ochozias, and wife of Joiada the high priest, brought up and educated in the temple to the age of seven years, the only surviving scion of the race of David, the child Joas, son of Ochozias, thus concealing him from the pursuit of the ambitious Athalia, wife of Joram.

* Leviticus xii. † 1 Kings i. ‡ 4 Kings xi. 1–3.

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The infant Mary was doubtless the sole consolation of her aged parents, who regarded her as a special gift of the Most High, as the most precious gift that they ever could have imagined or desired. But if this heavenly child had thus far constituted the ineffable joy of her father and mother, she now placed them under the necessity of giving an unequivocal proof of great virtue. We have already said how, when asking of God to be delivered from the shame of sterility, Joachim and Anne had vowed to consecrate to the service of the temple that daughter whom God granted them. Faithful to their solemn promise, they are now to be deprived of this darling object of their love. This sacrifice which they must accomplish is a great one, and it surely touches them in the tenderest spot of their hearts; but their piety is solid and their religion ardent, and they will not grow weak in the path of virtue. Joachim and Anne loved their daughter with the tenderest love; but as they loved her in God and for God, their love was entirely pure and holy: hence, generously stifling the voice of nature, they preferred God's glory and pleasure to their own content and advantage; and here it is just to remark, that they might have accomplished their vow by presenting Mary in the temple, and, after giving the three shekels prescribed by Leviticus for the ransom of a daughter from one month to five years old, promised to God, they might have taken her back to Nazareth as the only comfort of their declining age: but leaving such ransoming to less generous and less pious parents, they are ready, cost what the sacrifice may, to render unto God their only daughter, obtained of him by a singular miracle.

Thus resolved, they set out from Nazareth for the holy city, taking Mary with them. Mary, says St. Gregory of Nyssa,*

* *Orat. de Natiy. seu de humili Christi nativitate.*



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lively, agile, bounding with joy, though scarcely three years old,* runs to the temple more willingly than the maiden enamored of a young monarch to the abode of her royal spouse.

At the presentation of Mary in the temple, which, according to the opinion of some, took place during the solemnity of the Encœnia, there assisted, according to St. Germanus, Nicephorus, and others, not only the parents, but also, by the will of Heaven, many of the noblest persons in Jerusalem, while thousands of invisible angels around her revelled in joy. Zachary, according to the opinion of the majority, was the priest who received the young and holy Virgin into the temple.† The ties of kindred which united Zachary to Joa-

* It is the common opinion that the Blessed Virgin was presented in the temple soon after the conclusion of her third year. Such is the assertion of Evodius, St. Gregory, St. Germanus, Theodotus, bishop of Ancyra, St. John Damascenus, St. Andrew of Crete, Gregory of Nicomedia, the author of the book of the Nativity of Mary, attributed to St. Jerome; Nicephorus Callixtus, Bartholomew of Trent, Theodoret, de Castro, Baronius, and others. See the Roman Breviary printed in 1501, the Carmelite one of 1509, which in the Collect says, that the Blessed Virgin was presented in the temple "post triennium." In the Franciscan Breviary, printed at Venice in 1515, we see in the morning hymn the following words:

Votum solventes filiam
Ad templum trinam deferunt
Deo placentem hostiam
Ibi mansuram deserunt.

And in the Roman Missal, printed at Venice in 1493, we read in the sequence:

Benedicta Virgo nata
Templo trima præsentata
It ter quinis gradibus.

And here we must remark that Pope Sixtus V., on restoring in 1585, the feast of which we speak at length in the close of the chapter, wisely replaced the words "post triennium," by "hodierna die," which are in the prayer, in order that it could not be said that Rome sanctioned the opinion. There is then no decisive proof for the age of three years, yet it is a very well supported opinion.

† Although Zachary dwelt at Hebron with his family, it is not strange to find him at Jerusalem, as the Hebrew priests had to leave their houses and families in turn, so as not to be distracted in the functions of the priesthood.

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chim, the elevated post which he occupied in the temple, and the tender affection which Mary always preserved for him and for Elizabeth, render this opinion most probable.

Assured, moreover, of the memorable fact of the sacrifice of herself which Mary made to God, and which the pious couple made of their beloved daughter, without entering into any details as to the exterior circumstances which attended that sacrifice, admirable and extraordinary as they were —we will say, that never had there been made in that temple an offering greater or more agreeable to God. Yet Solomon had immolated there his countless victims, at the feast of the dedication, to invest with greater splendor that new solemnity; but all these sacrifices together did not equal the spontaneous, generous, ardent, irrevocable offer which the young Virgin of Jesse made of herself to her God.

Who can, indeed, express the piety of that child joyfully leaving country, home, kindred, aged parents, in a word, all, to consecrate herself solely to her Divine Master? Who can tell the profound humility, the lively faith, the firm hope, the magnanimous courage, all the virtues which she displayed in this noble sacrifice? But one word suffices: the Immaculate Virgin offered herself to God!

Yet we may be permitted, after the most esteemed writers, to describe briefly the exterior ceremony:—The young handmaid of the Lord, who passed, so to speak, from the cradle to the temple, knelt before the high priest Zachary, around whom stood the Levites, his brethren, to assist in the sacred rite. Joachim and Anne, their hearts deeply moved, presented him on the threshold their beloved daughter; they confided to his care that blessed Virgin, now laid at his feet, to offer her as a perpetual holocaust. The high priest in the name of the Lord, who fructifies the womb of mothers, even in advanced age, accepts with holy respect the precious deposit which grat-

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itude confides to him, and which the ties of blood render still dearer, and opening his heart to the joyful hope of seeing Elizabeth's sterility cease, the holy old man opened his lips to bless Mary's parents, like Heli of old, on a similar occasion, blessing Elcana and his happy spouse; while amid joyous chants, mingled with the sound of the sacerdotal harps, the young Virgin, admitted into the interior of the temple, accomplished the great sacrifice of herself.*

O admirable example! incomparable solicitude, to fly from the world to consecrate herself to God! And yet what could the Blessed Virgin ever fear from living in her father's house? Would not her aged parents have watched over her like the pupil of their eye? Would they not have set her the example of every virtue? Doubtless; but the beloved handmaid of the Most High could scarcely tread the earth with a firm foot, when she preferred the house of God to her father's house. After so admirable an example given in so tender an age, by the Queen of Angels herself, who dare venture to blame him who flies the world and devotes himself to God, or to retard the accomplishment of a vocation, the loss of which jeopardizes the eternal salvation of the soul?

After the ceremony, while Joachim and Anne, weeping, but resigned and content in their heart at the accomplishment of the vow, left the temple to return to Nazareth, you might behold in the divine enclosure the young Virgin consecrated to God, and chosen from all eternity to give to the

* Many writers say that the holy young Virgin, placed at the bottom of the steps, of which we have spoken, impelled by her excessive desire of flying to God in the temple, by a special impulse of the Holy Ghost, ascended the steps alone, firm, intrepid, and active, and proceeded as far as the sanctuary, to the great astonishment of all present, including her parents and the high-priest himself. ST. GERMANUS, *de Oblat. B. V.*—GREGORY of Nicomedia, *Oratio de oblatione Virg.*, and others.

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earth the Desired of the Nations, the promised Messias. By this event was accomplished the prophecy of Aggeus: "Great shall be the glory of this last house" (in which the Saviour of the world shall enter) "more than of the first." *

To honor the innocence of the chosen young Virgin, and to recall the time when God separated her from the world, in order to prepare her for the accomplishment of his divine decrees, the Church has instituted a festival, under the title of the PRESENTATION OF MARY IN THE TEMPLE. Some insist that this feast began in the ninth century, in Greece and the East, and base their opinion on some homilies of George of Nicomedia, a contemporary of Photius, patriarch of Constantinople; but we think that this George of Nicomedia has been confounded with George of Pisidia, who lived in the seventh century, for it is beyond all doubt that the feast of the Presentation was celebrated in the eighth century, inasmuch as it is comprised in the constitution of Emmanuel Comnenus, a constitution of which we have already spoken. The Russians have taken this feast from the Greeks, as they have taken most of their rites, as did also the Copts or Jacobites of Egypt. The feast of the Presentation was instituted in the West at a much later date, that is to say, in 1373, by the influence of a French nobleman named Philip de Maizieres, chancellor of the island of Cyprus, where the house of Lusignan then reigned. Sent as ambassador by his king, Philip, to Pope Gregory XI., then sitting at Avignon, Philip de Maizieres told the sovereign Pontiff that the Orientals celebrated the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the temple, and in proof gave him the office to read. The Pope after having had the office examined, approved it, and the same year celebrated the feast at Avignon, with all the Roman

* AGGEUS ii. 10.



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Court. Yet it would seem that the feast of the Presentation gradually fell into oblivion, at least till the period when Gregory XI. restored to Rome the apostolic see.

Louis de Maizieres was then sent as ambassador of the King of Cyprus to the court of France; he inspired King Charles V. with so great a devotion for this feast, that that monarch wrote to the professors of the college of Navarre to excite them to celebrate the solemnity, declaring it his wish to have it yearly celebrated for ever. Cardinal Ximenes, we are told, instituted it, and the feast of St. Joseph, at his church of Toledo in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Cardinal Quiñonez, appointed by Clement VII. to reform the Breviary, fixed the office of the Presentation on the 21st of November, more especially as it is believed* that this feast was instituted at Rome in the time of Pius II. and Paul II. But the breviary of Quiñonez, although approved by Clement VII. and Paul III., was suppressed by St. Pius V. After an examination under the pontificate of Sixtus V., the celebration of this feast was prescribed anew in the year 1585.† This Sovereign Pontiff, on adding this to the other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, ordered it to be mentioned in the calendar, and recited in all the Church as an office of double rite.

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* In the martyrology of Usuard, as Molano attests, we read: "Hierosolymis Præsentatio Beatæ Genitricis Dei Mariæ, quam Pius et Paulus, pontifices Romani cum indulgentiis instituerant.

† The words of the decree are: "Aliis igitur celebritatibus perpetuæ Virginis, quæ ab æterno præparatur, et propheticis testificationibus prænunciata, nondum Mater Dei Angelo nuntiante fuerat effecta, a Catholica Ecclesia consecratis, ejusdem quoque, quæ templum Dei futura erat, et sacrarium Spiritus Sancti, in templum præsentationem ab antiquissimis usque temporibus summa ubique gentium cum veneratione observatam adscribi volumus, et, sicubi intermissa est, restitui ac jugiter custodiri. Benedict XIV. *De Festi.*

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CHAPTER XI.

MARY'S LIFE IN THE TEMPLE.—VOW OF VIRGINITY.

MARY, that noble plant gemmed with the dew of heaven, soon produced in that chosen garden blossoms and fruit of admirable sanctity. "Rich with fruits like the prolific olive," says St. John Damascenus, "she was the abode of all virtues, in order that she might be worthy to conceive in her chaste womb the God, who, being holy, reposes in the saints." *

It is the opinion of most of the Fathers and sacred writers that Mary, as soon as she saw herself secure in that asylum of peace and happiness, resolved to preserve herself exteriorly such as she was interiorly by grace, in order to display her gratitude to God who had conducted her thither, and by a special favor had created her exempt from sin. Then it was that

"That heavenly child, that maid divine,"

* De fide orthod. Book IV. ch. xiv.

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made a solemn vow to consecrate herself for ever to God. The angels heard that vow, and beheld themselves not only equalled but even far surpassed by her who made the promise: for Mary became by her will and the grace of heaven, what they are by nature.

Thus co-operating with divine grace, Mary was like that flower, till then unknown, which, white and fragrant, grew amid the thorns of this valley of tears, the most pleasing flower to him who delights only amid the lilies. By that vow which seemed for ever to preclude her from the title of mother, the chaste young Virgin approached the dignity of Mother of God, and crossing the barrier which separated the ancient from the New Law, plunged into the ocean of evangelical virtues. If the Scriptures do not mention this vow, all the Fathers, unanimous on this point, speak of it in connection with the words which passed between Mary and the angel herald of the great mystery, as we shall show in due time.

The uncommon virtues which radiated forth in this dear child, and the supernatural gifts with which God had singularly adorned her, made the directresses and mistresses of this cloister, the priests and Levites, soon admire in her the most astonishing progress, high intelligence, wisdom beyond her years, in a word, a prodigy of grace. St. Ambrose, St. Anselm, St. Bonaventure say that she was "sober in word, prompt to obey, devoted in labor, assiduous in prayer, ever calm and modest, exhaling an odor of heaven." *

St. Gregory of Tours says that he learnt by divine revelation that "Mary in the temple slept on the bare boards, practised austerities and fasts, increased in virtue day by

* St. Ambrose, Book II. *De Virg.*—St. Anselm, *de Exc. B. V.*—St. Bonaventure, *Life of Christ*, ch. iii.



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day, and that all saw resplendent in her beauty of soul and beauty of body." * St. Andrew of Crete represents her as "ever irreproachable, recollected, and buried in contemplation, giving a most beautiful example of profound humility, angelic modesty, heavenly joy, and every other singular virtue." †

We cannot then be astonished that Mary, by the mildness of her disposition, her noble bearing, rare modesty, gentle features, graceful conversation and sanctity of life, gladdened that choir of virgins, and excited them to run with more fervor in the path of perfection, whose summit she had, notwithstanding her youth, already attained. It was beautiful to see her docility to the lessons of her masters, her care to anticipate their wishes, execute their orders and practise their counsels. In her speech and silence, motion and rest, all was eloquent, because all revealed in her an admirable maturity of mind.

It was not enough for Mary to exercise all virtues, nor to follow scrupulously the rule of that community which we will justly call blessed, from having welcomed to its bosom the greatest of all creatures: her only desire was to unite herself more and more closely to God by the bonds of the tenderest love. According to the authority of some Fathers and Doctors,‡ the mode of life followed by the Blessed Virgin in the temple was as follows: "At midnight she rose and entered the Holy of Holies § to excite in her heart the fire of divine

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* *Liber de Salut. Angel.*

† *Oratio de Dormit. B. V. M.*

‡ St. Anselm, *de Laudibus Virginis.*—St. Epiphanius, *de Vita Virginis.*—Gregory of Nicomedia.—St. John Damascenus.

§ Other Fathers more numerous and reliable, maintain that the Blessed Virgin never entered this spot; 1st. The priests alone could enter there, and that but once a year; 2d. Mary always observed faithfully the legal prescriptions; 3d. Because it is incredible that Mary, the model of humility, ever implored a grace

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love. From the morning till the third hour she remained in prayer: from the third till the ninth hour beheld her engaged in external labors, and praying without interruption, till the nourishment of which she partook was brought to her by an angel of God: for she distributed to the poor what was allowed to her by the priests." Yet it seems to us more suitable to believe that the Virgin, who at all times devoted herself to humility, by concealing with special care the most signal graces, which God with a lavish hand bestowed upon her, did not vary from the rule of life imposed on the other young virgins, and that whenever she was gladdened by the presence of angels, visible to her alone, and was served by them, it was when in her habitual place in the temple she was in prayer with her companions. What need, indeed, had the Blessed Virgin of courting recollection in a retired spot, who in all her actions ever preserved the closest union with God? Mary, while still quite young, says St. Peter Damian,* combined the exercises of the active and contemplative life; whence we may believe, that, while at the prescribed hours she was engaged with her companions in spinning or sewing, embroidering or weaving the stuffs needed for the adornment of the sanctuary or use of the priests at sacrifice, her soul was never diverted from the contemplation of divine things.

It is easy to show that Mary practised the exercise of this twofold life; for by a special care of Divine Providence, having been led into the temple to prepare better for the conception and birth of the Incarnate Word, she must have conformed to the holiest and most perfect, that is, to the mixed life.†

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that would have rendered her privileged among all her companions, and even the priests.

* *Sermo de Nativ. Virginis.*

† All the theologians and mystics agree as to the perfection of the mixed life;



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Moreover, no creature can better serve as an example to Jesus Christ than his Blessed Mother; now Jesus Christ practised the twofold life, hence the Virgin of Nazareth did also.

There cannot be a doubt but that Mary, preferring the contemplative life, which is the better part, devoted the greater part of her time to meditation on the Holy Scriptures and the mysteries which were to be one day accomplished in her. "No one," says St. Ambrose, "was ever more richly endowed than Mary with the sublime gift of contemplation; her mind, ever in unison with her heart, never lost sight of him who was loved more ardently by her, than by all the seraphim together. Her whole life was a continual exercise of the purest love of God, so much so that when sleep came to weigh down and close her eyelids, her heart still waked in prayer." *

O with what wings, not of the simple dove, but of the noblest eagle, did Mary rise to the most sublime degree of contemplation! How sweet, beautiful and tender must have been the words of Mary to her God, who had called her into his temple to speak nearer and more ardently to her heart, as is said of the spouse in the sacred canticles.

According to the common opinion, the Blessed Virgin remained twelve years in the temple, leading a perfectly angelic life; and, according to the unanimous consent of the

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for its direct object is charity, that is to say, the salvation of our neighbor; a salvation which is sought in the act, whereby the soul endeavors, as far as possible, to remain united with God by means of contemplation. Considered in the abstract, Contemplation is better than the active life, as Christ said to Martha: "Mary has chosen the better part," but the mixed life is preferable to contemplation alone; and this mixed life was almost always, as we shall see, that of the Blessed Virgin.

* Lib. II. de Virgine.

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Fathers, her constant prayer was to invoke the coming of the Redeemer, whom all ages awaited with impatience, desired with love, and invoked with the most ardent expressions, inasmuch as they invited the "clouds to rain down the Just One, and the earth to bud forth a Saviour." The Fathers moreover affirm that God, by decreeing the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, had wished that the world, by imploring him with entreaties, prayers and sighs, should at the same time prepare to receive so great a gift: on which Orosius adds: "that it was in a manner a combat between God and men; a combat begun by the patriarchs, continued by the just of the Old Law, and terminated by the Virgin enclosed in the temple, that chief battle-field." *

We love to believe that Mary made a vow of virginity to God, almost as soon as she entered the temple, for several saints thus devoted themselves to God at the tenderest age. The Virgin, doubtless, seeking in all the merit of docility and obedience, first informed her happy parents, and they, we must piously believe, heard with joy this vow of their blessed child, and that they confirmed her in this holy resolution, thus unconsciously favoring the end which God proposed in his creature of predilection. We give here not our own private opinion, but that of Cardinal Baronius, who says: "We believe ourselves within the truth, when we say that Mary, before being united to Joseph, had made a vow of virginity, with the consent of her parents, since these had conceived the greatest hope of the sanctity of that child." †

Some have taken pleasure in discussing whether Mary's vow was conditional or not from the first. With different Fathers of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas thinks

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* Orosius, Tom. III. *in Fest. Præs.* † In apparatu ad Hist. Eccl. § 58.

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that Mary took the vow twice: that the first was conditional, and the latter, after her marriage with Joseph, absolute.* Yet we prefer to believe with other Fathers and Doctors,† that the vow of the Queen of Angels was absolute and perpetual from the first; inasmuch as it seems quite probable, that, at the very instant when the young Virgin, by a singular inspiration of the Holy Ghost, pronounced this vow, she was assured by God himself, that he who inspired it could preserve her from all danger. Moreover, since the vow of Mary was most agreeable to God, it is necessary to conclude that it was worthy of her whom the Church justly calls "Virgin most prudent—Virgin most chaste." These virtues would not have been extolled in her, if her vow had any thing rash or unreflected about it; and we cannot believe that she exposed herself to danger in espousing Joseph: "for," says the Angelic Doctor, "Mary had acquired of God the certainty of her preserving her virginity in the married state." ‡

Hence St. Bernard exclaims: "O prudent and pious Virgin, who then taught thee that Virginity is pleasing to God? What law, what page of the Old Testament, commands or counsels its preservation, or the angelical life? Thou hadst for this virtue neither precept, nor counsel, nor example, but thou hadst the living and potent word of that God, who, first thy Lord and then thy Son, instructed thy mind before assuming our flesh in thy virginal womb." §

Become in heaven the model of perfect purity, Mary first planted the sacred standard of virginity, and by it she

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* 3d Part, Quæst. 28, Art. 4.

† Origen, *in* Cap. xiii. *Matt.*—St. Ambrose, *in Instit. Virg*—St. Jerome, *Epist. to Eustachium.*—St. Bernard, Homily III. on the Missus est.

‡ In IV. Sent. Distinct. XXX. Quæst. 2. Art. 182.

§ Hom. 3, on the *Missus est.*

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began the dignity of virgins. Beautiful is the example which Mary gives to all, but especially to consecrated Virgins who lead a cloistered life, "if," says St. Ambrose, "looking upon her, they see how carefully they should preserve their virginal candor, and regulate their life." * Like the virgins of Israel after the passage of the Red Sea, crowding around Mary, the Sister of Moses, to chant the canticle of thanksgiving, so too will they hereafter, having traversed the stormy ocean of life, ranged around Mary, intone in glory the canticle of eternal felicity with the privileged choirs of virgins, who precede all the other virtues; for virginity marches like a queen followed by all the choir of moral and divine virtues. Faith caresses it; hope embraces it; charity covers it with kisses of love; patience, constancy, perseverance, wisdom, vigilance, contempt for the world, weave her crown. Agreeable to God, dear to angels, respected by men, it has the first crown after martyrdom. When the young virgin, surrounded by so glorious a convoy, is about to leave this world, she utters no complaint, she feels no regret; she hears her divine Spouse call her, and invite her to the eternal nuptials; ravished with joy, she soars to him, and thus gathers the divine fruit of her sacrifice.

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* Lib. II. *de Virgine*



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THE MARRIAGE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

James P. Kirker
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BOOK SECOND.

THE ANNUNCIATION FROM HER DEPARTURE FROM THE TEMPLE TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

MARRIAGE OF MARY WITH JOSEPH.



HAVING closing the first book of Mary's life, by recounting the vow of virginity in which she consecrated herself forever to God, and the splendid testimonies the Holy Ghost pronounced on that virtue, which even the angels admire, it seems astonishing that we should break the thread of the narrative by the solemn ceremonies followed by the Virgin and enriched with poetic ornaments that could be at variance with the purity of those sacred laws we have followed of Mary's virginity. So far from this, as we shall see, the shadow capable of clouding its lustre is the very proof of it; it is a decree of God, that the virginity of God preserved her virginal purity; so that her espousal and marriage to Joseph, it was only



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BOOK SECOND.

OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN FROM HER DEPARTURE FROM THE TEMPLE TO THE DEATH OF HER MOST CHASTE SPOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

MARRIAGE OF MARY WITH JOSEPH.

AFTER closing the first book of Mary's life, by recounting the vow of virginity in which she devoted herself for ever to God, and the splendid eulogies which the Holy Fathers pronounce on that virtue, which renders men like angels, it seems astonishing that we should resume the thread of the narrative by the solemn marriage celebrated by the Virgin and enriched with posterity. Far from us, aught that could be at variance with the high and just conception which we have formed of Mary's angelical purity! far from us every shadow capable of clouding her immaculate chastity! it is a dogma of faith, that the most Blessed Mother of God preserved her virginal purity; and if she unites herself in marriage to Joseph, it was only to have



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in him a witness of her innocence; a guardian of her purity and honor, a comforter in her trials, a protector in the journey of life, a foster father for her divine Son, and a means, as the Fathers say, to conceal from hell the sublime work of redemption. Inasmuch as the Messias was to be born of a virgin, the devil could not see that future mother of the Christ in a married woman.*

But let us resume the sequel of our story.

We have already said, that it was the custom of the Jews to marry their daughters at an early age. Adorned with virtue and beauty, Mary was now fifteen: she was dear to God and honored by men. The priest, who knew all the prerogatives with which she was endowed, sought to give her a spouse worthy of her. This care seemed to belong to the ministry of the sanctuary, inasmuch as Mary had been for three years an orphan.† Having then called her, they informed her of their plan. We may easily conceive what a wound Mary felt

* There are four reasons which induce the Fathers and historians to show not only the propriety, but also the necessity of the Virgin Mother of the Messias being married to a man of her tribe. First, that Mary's genealogy might be shown by that of Joseph; Second, that on her becoming pregnant, she might not be condemned by the Jews to be stoned; Third, that she might have a support in her flight into Egypt; Fourth, that the devil might remain ignorant of the Redeemer's birth, because he could not discover the Messias in the child of a married woman. The first three reasons are St. Jerome's; the fourth St. Ignatius, the martyr's. The Angel of the Schools uses the same proofs. See also St. Basil, tom. XXV. St. John Damascenus, Book IV. ch. xv.

† It is generally believed that Mary was left an orphan at the age of eleven. Yet some say that St. Anne lived till the fourth year of our Lord. However, whether Joachim left the Blessed Virgin under the special protection of the priests, or that the magistrate who took care of orphans, provided her with a guardian from the family of Aaron, to which Mary was allied on her mother's side, or that the wardenship of girls consecrated to the service of the temple, was by law confided to the Levites, it is very probable that this guardianship was given to Zachary, husband of Elizabeth, who was a near relative, and from his high repute for virtue, seemed called to this post of protection.

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in her heart at this news. She long, through modesty, objected. Yet, as among the ministers of the Most High none supported her wish,—for she asked what was reproved by the law of Moses,—she was forced to reveal the vow of virginity, which bound her for ever. On learning this, till then unheard-of promise, made to God by that flower of the stem of Jesse, by that young maiden of the posterity of David, all remained speechless with surprise and admiration.* High as was their idea of virtue, they thought that this vow had not been made without the express will of God, and they did not omit to consult the Almighty in so important a question. The high priest, assured, as it is credible, of the will of Heaven, informed perhaps too of the immaculate candor of the Virgin, confirmed her in her resolution, and exhorted her to put all her confidence in that God who, exalting her to such high perfection, reserved her for great things.

Meanwhile, the priests resolved to marry the holy young Virgin to one of her kinsmen, who was himself to concur in the observance of the vow which she had taken, instead of seeking to infringe it. This marriage satisfied exteriorly a usage by which the sole heir and heiress of the same family should unite in marriage, a usage which had obtained the force of law among the descendants of David; for as the Christ was to be born of the family of David, all had at heart to preserve that predestined race, and each one aspired to the glory of being numbered among the ancestors of the Messias. On Joseph devolved the happiness of espousing the daughter of Joachim

* We find in the Old Testament more than one example of virginity preserved, as we see in Josue, Elias, Eliseus, Jeremias, Daniel, in Jephte's daughter, &c. Yet none of them was bound by vow. On learning her father's imprudent vow, by which she was doomed to death, Jephte's daughter asked two months to mourn over her virginity, so honored was marriage among the Jews.

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and Anne.* But before stating how this holy union took place, we shall speak of Joseph, to whom was reserved so glorious a part in the birth and in the life of the Redeemer, and to whom the surname of just is given in the sacred pages; and here, as we have ever done, we shall relate only what is certain or most probable.

The Fathers unanimously affirm that Joseph was descended from the same tribe as the Blessed Virgin: that is to say, of the tribe of Juda; that he was the son of Jacob, nephew of Mathan, and of the royal family of David, which had held the sceptre till the captivity of Babylon. In fact, the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke trace his genealogy, to prove that he descended from Abraham and David. If we know not the place of his birth, we know at least that he resided ordinarily at Nazareth, where, according to the common opinion, he pursued the trade of a smith.† Many believe that Joseph was already old when he had the glory of espous-

* We are not ignorant that some have related the matter differently, stating that the High Priest having learnt the Blessed Virgin's vow, convoked the Doctors of the law and the gravest men in order to take their advice. They all answered, that it would be necessary to assemble in the temple all the descendants of the royal family who were of an age to marry, and that he whose staff should bud forth flowers, on which a dove should sport, should become the happy spouse of Mary. On the appointed day, Joseph came with the others, and in him alone the prodigy was accomplished. Then the priest and the rest knew that God intended Mary for Joseph. This story is given by Novato (*De Emin. Virg.*, ch. vi. quæst. 4), and by other theologians of some authority. Some, with Dennis the Carthusian (in the Life of St. Anne), say that Agabus desired so earnestly to marry Mary, that he employed necromancy, but, unable to succeed, renounced the world and retired to Mount Carmel, where he began to live in great sanctity; at a later period he followed our Lord, became one of the seventy-two disciples, and was famous for his prophecies. (Hist. of Mount Carmel.—GRAZIANI, Life of St. Joseph.)

† Others prefer to believe that he was a carpenter. Moreover, it is certain, as we read in St. John, either on account of his skill or his goodness, he was known at Capharnaum and other parts of Galilee at a distance from Nazareth.

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ing the queen of Angels, and for this reason he is represented as an old man with white beard and hair, and wrinkled brow ; * and his venerable age has an indescribable beauty and almost divine majesty. Yet we prefer the opinion of those who affirm,—and they are the most judicious theologians and commentators,—that Joseph, when he espoused the young Virgin of Nazareth,† was neither young nor old, but in the prime and maturity of life. This opinion concords admirably with the mission confided to him. Too young, he would not have appeared to those who judge only by appearances, as sufficiently pious, prudent or strong to protect and guard the Blessed Virgin ; and too old, he would not have been able to accompany her in her long and painful voyages, and fulfil the holy duties of foster father of the son, and protector of the mother.

Moreover, had he been eighty years old, as Epiphanius and Cedrenus pretend, he could not have preserved from the tongue of slander his chaste spouse on her becoming a mother.‡ Joseph was then of mature age,§ and if painters represent him as an old man, it is only, as Gerson says,‖ to

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* He is thus represented by the Protevangelion of St. John, Epiphanius, Cedrenus, Nicephorus, and especially by painters and poets.

† It may be asked, how did Mary resolve to marry Joseph, after consecrating herself to God by a vow of perpetual chastity? It was because she knew with certainty, by divine revelation, that she would find in Joseph a guardian, and not a violator of her virginity and purity. This is the opinion of all the Fathers.

‡ The Jewish law disapproved the marriage of a young maiden to an old man. Basnage, Hist. of the Mosaic Ins., Vol. V., Book 8. But neither the priests nor Joseph would have violated this law.

§ Verisimilius est Josephum nec valde juvenem, nec valde senem fuisse, cum beatam Virginem duxit, sed maturæ ætatis. Suarez, Pt. III. Dist. 8, § 3.—Baronius, Ann. 12, § 9.—Vasquez, Pt. III. Dist. 125, ch. xi. 2.—Serry, Exerc. xxv.

‖ Gerson in Josephina, IV.

Ergo Joseph pinxisse senem fecere senîles
In se virtutes, vel neu carnalis haberet
Suspicio de te quidquam carnale, Maria.

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show that the practice of virtues had made him old rather than years, and that the fire of youth was already extinguished in him; now what could more aptly express this twofold thought, than to represent him under the form of a venerable old man?*

We must consign to the class of fables, or at least regard as devoid of solid foundation, the opinion of those who say that Joseph was a widower, and father of four or even six children, when he became the spouse of the Blessed Virgin;† because, as he was to be a support to her, it was necessary that he should approach her in all virtues, and imitate her no less in her virginity.

Moreover, if our Redeemer on his cross commended his mother‡ with his dying lips, to a virgin disciple, how could he have waived so noble a prerogative in the faithful guardian of that mother? and if Joseph is called in the sacred text "the just," it is because he was just by universal justice. Now justice, says St. Jerome, is the perfect observance, not only of all the commandments, but also of all the counsels of perfection, among which is included that of perpetual chastity.

A man adorned with such striking virtues, was then deemed by the priests worthy to have as his spouse, the

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* Others say that Joseph seemed old, because he was wrinkled by hardships and trials.

† See the Protevangelion and the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary. St. Epiphanius, St. Ambrose, Eusebius, Origen, and many others, adopt this opinion, which is, however, the least followed. St. Jerome, writing against Helvidius, says, expressly: "Aliam uxorem habuisse non scribitur." St. Augustine leaves the question undecided. St. Peter Damian affirms, that all the Church believes that St. Joseph lived in virginity like Mary.

‡ Specialis prærogativa castitatis ampliori delectione fecerat dignum. . . . Cui Christus in cruce matrem Virginem Virgini commendavit. ROMAN BREVIARY, Office of St. John, 2d and 1st Nocturn.

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Blessed Virgin, who willingly consented to the marriage, having learned from God, that Joseph would be the respectful guardian of her virginal purity.

Hence, with a heart full of holy joy, Joseph, according to custom, gave the wedding ring to his spouse in the presence of the high priest. After the espousal had been thus celebrated, the betrothed awaited the appointed day for the solemnization of the marriage, which, among the Jews, was postponed for a considerable time; meanwhile the spouses enjoyed all liberty with each other, as Philo assures us.

The day of the espousals, when the names of the betrothed were inscribed on tablets, and that of the marriage, when the bride was solemnly conducted to the house of the bridegroom, were both festivities.*

The latter ceremony was celebrated as follows:

When the appointed day arrived, the betrothed repaired to a room richly adorned, and placed themselves under a canopy, their heads covered with a veil called "taled." Then the chanter of the synagogue, or the nearest relative of the bridegroom, filled a cup of wine, which he gave them to drink, pronouncing the words of benediction.† After that, the bridegroom placed the ring on the bride's finger, saying: "Behold thou art my wife, according to the rite of Moses and Israel." ‡

It is believed that the married couple, before the destruc-

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* Lib. de Special, leg.

† The formula was, "Blessed be the Lord, who created man and woman, and ordained marriage."

‡ All do not agree as to the marriage ceremonies; some say that there were rings; one which the groom gave to the bride; the other belonging to the temple, and larger, because during the ceremony both put their fingers in it. It is pretended that the former of these rings used in Mary's marriage is preserved at Namur, the other in Perugia. See Benedict XIV. De Festis.

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tion of the temple, wore garlands on their heads on the day of the marriage.* For the second time wine was brought in a fragile vessel, and after different benedictions, some was given to each to drink, and the rest was poured out in token of gladness. The bridegroom then taking the vessel, dashed it on the ground, to show that the greatest joys are followed by the greatest pains. The guests wished the married pair every kind of prosperity.† A pompous banquet followed, for which they sang the praises of the Lord, after the example of Raguel, when he married his daughter to Tobias. The paranymph did the honors of the table, and fulfilled the orders of the bridegroom, who always had a number of young men around him to accompany him, as the bride had a number of women.‡ The festivities lasted seven days; and took place in the house of the bride's father; and at last, as we have said, she was conducted in procession at night § to the house of the bridegroom, by the light of lamps and torches, with joyous chant and the sound of musical instruments.

We do not know whether this ceremonial was observed at the marriage of Joseph and Mary, because the Fathers, overlooking the rites practised on the occasion, consider only the sanctity of Mary's marriage with Joseph, and the economy of divine Providence in the restoration of the human race. The

* Thus in the Canticle of Canticles we read: "Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart." Cant. iii. 11.

† We read in Genesis (xxiv. 60), "Wishing prosperity to their sister, and saying, Thou art our sister, mayest thou increase to thousands of thousands, and may thy seed possess the gates of thy enemies."

‡ One of the chief amusements of the young men consisted in proposing enigmas, and the bridegroom rewarded those who guessed the solution.

§ We have a proof in the parable of the ten virgins, who, during the night, took lamps and went to meet the bridegroom and bride.

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angelic doctor St. Thomas * thinks, that immediately after the marriage ceremony, the happy spouses with one accord bound themselves by oath, to live in perpetual chastity. Others believe that Mary revealed to her spouse her vow of virginity, and that he, far from contradicting her,† confirmed her vow, so to speak, by making a similar promise, and saying: "Thou shalt be to me as my mother, and I shall respect thee as the altar of the Most High." These expressions signified that in the eyes of the religious law, they should live in marriage as brother and sister.‡

Blessed Joseph, who hadst the glory of being the spouse of the Mother of God! Of him may be justly said: "The bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride, and thy God shall rejoice over thee."§ In what blessing of marriage, according to the unanimous observation of the Fathers, were these pure and holy spouses wanting? Not affection, for they loved each other tenderly: not fidelity, for they both persevered in the highest degree of purity: not incentive to virtue, for

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* In IV. Sent. Distinct. xxv., quæst. 2.

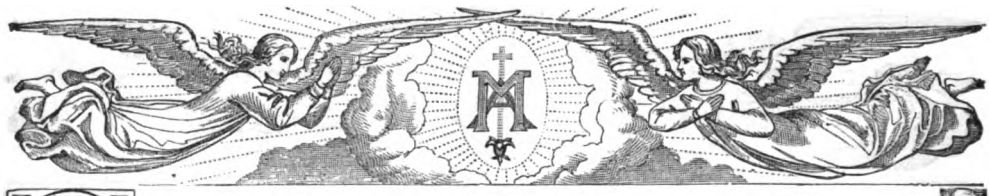
† In the Revelations of St. Bridget, book VII. ch. xxv., we read: "You must know that Joseph, before espousing me, learned in the Holy Ghost, that I had consecrated my virginity to God, and that I was immaculate in thought, word, and deed, and that he married me with the intention of serving me as his sovereign, and I knew certainly in the Holy Ghost, that my virginity would remain intact."

‡ This vow of continency, which has been the object of a thousand impious sarcasms from the school of Voltaire, was not unusual among the Jews. When a man said to his wife, "Thou art for me as my mother," he was no longer permitted to use his rights as a husband, and still less if in his vow he mentioned the altar of God, the temple, or the sacrifice. Sometimes women also made the same vow; and although this vow was scarcely approved, as it resulted from anger or cursing, yet those who took it were bound to observe it scrupulously. Moreover, the vow of the holy pair proceeded solely from piety. BASNAGE, ch. xix.—LEO OF MODENA, ch. iv.

§ Gaudebit sponsus super sponsam et gaudebit super te Deus tuus. ISAIAS, lxii. 5.



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Joseph had before him the example of Mary: not the joys of a family, for of Mary was born the Redeemer, towards whom Joseph was to exercise on earth all the duties of father and foster parent.

To what can we better compare the blessed spouses, than to the two cherubim, which looked upon each with respect, and covered the propitiatory with their wings? Mary and Joseph were in fact destined to protect, bring up, and instruct the Son of God, become Man, at the same time that they were united together by the sweet bond of the purest, holiest, most admirable marriage ever seen on earth. This marriage, although both preserved a perfect continence, was a true and real marriage as the gospel affirms, calling them spouses,* and all this was not without a sublime design of Providence.

For, says St. Augustine, "as the infant was to be born exempt from sin, it was necessary that he should be conceived by a virgin, in order that his conception might be exempt from concupiscence, daughter of sin." † St. Bernard adds: "As the Son of God chose to assume our mortal flesh to efface the spot of sin from all men, he must have an immaculate Virgin for his mother, in order to be born immaculate." ‡

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* The Blessed Virgin's marriage to Joseph was, as we have said, a real marriage. The evangelists call Joseph and Mary spouse, wife, &c. The vow of virginity diminishes naught of the reality of the marriage, for marriage consists in union freely consented to, in the power which the spouses give each over the other; but each can freely renounce the exercise of any rights, with the consent of the other. Matrimonium facit consensus non copula, says an old axiom of law. Was there no marriage between Adam and Eve in paradise? "Although a perfect marriage has all these conditions, viz., internal consent, external consent expressed by words, the obligation and tie which arise from the contract, and the marriage debt by which it is consummated; yet the obligation and tie expressed by the word 'union' alone have the force and nature of marriage." Catechism of the Council of Trent, (ed. Balt. 226.)

† De Nupt. et Conc., Lib. I., c. ii. and xiii.

‡ Hom. II., super Missus est.



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But at the same time God wished this Virgin to be married, for reasons which we have given. "But," pursues St. Bernard, "could not God give some manifest sign to prevent the birth from being defamed, and the mother accused of fault? Doubtless he might; but then what would have been evident to all men, would not have been concealed from the devils, and it was proper that the mystery of the divine counsel should be hidden for a time from the prince of this world. Not that God, had he chosen to effect this prodigious work openly, had cause to fear any obstacle on the part of the devil; but, as in all his other works, for the beauty of order, he observes the suitable time and matter, so in the magnificent work of our salvation, he chose to manifest alike his wisdom and power; it pleased him then to reconcile man according to the very mode and order of his fall. Now as the devil had first seduced the woman, then overcome man, by means of the woman, in his turn, the devil was to be deceived by the Virgin, and then openly combatted by the Man, that is by Christ."

Let all Christians then behold their image in Joseph and Mary, and learn how to fulfil their mutual obligations, and at the same time, to bow to the divine will.

Happy the spouses, who in their union propose Mary and Joseph as models, and imitate them in their holy virtues! Yet it is not necessary, in order to imitate them, to observe virginal chastity in marriage, as they did: "we should love and honor virginity," says St. Augustine, "but we must also honor marriage, which is the lawful means by which so many virgins are given to the earth."

Of how many other virtues does Mary's marriage with an humble mechanic, give us an example! To recall only one of these virtues, we shall say with St. Bernard: "How beautiful is the union of virginity and humility! God cher-



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ishes a soul in which humility gives price to virginity, and virginity serves as an ornament to humility. Now such was Mary, humble and a virgin. . . . If it is not given us to imitate her virginity, let us imitate her humility." "Virginity is a laudable virtue, but humility a necessary one. That is of counsel, this of precept. You may be saved without virginity, you cannot be without humility. The humility which weeps over lost virginity, may please God; even Mary's virginity would not have pleased God, without humility." *

We know not the day when Mary's marriage with Joseph was celebrated,—a marriage ordained by an admirable providence, and representing so well the union of Christ and his Church; a marriage so well fitted to inspire spouses with love of continence, or at least with conjugal fidelity, and the practice of all virtues. The Church celebrates the feast of this marriage on the 23d day of the month of January.

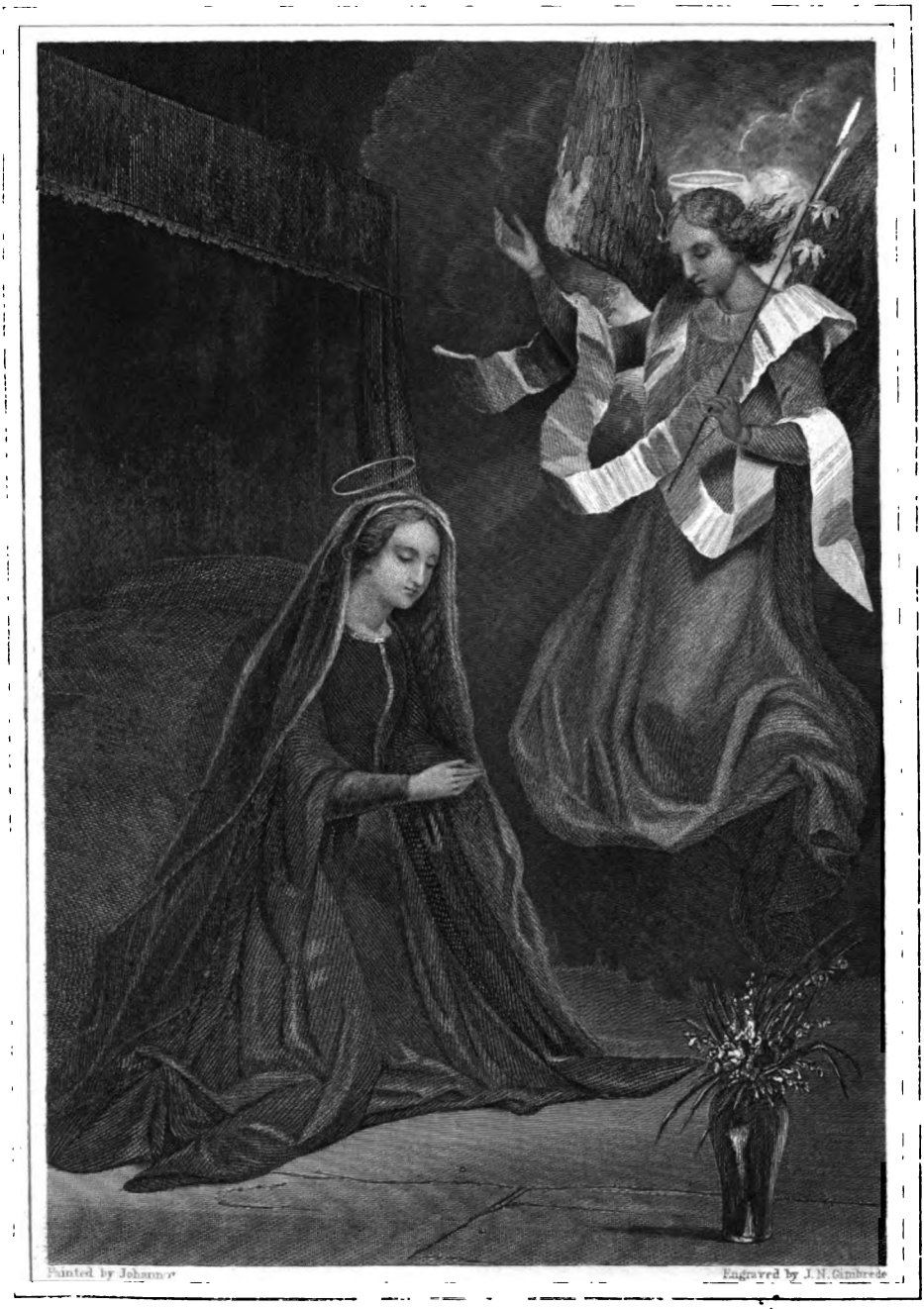
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* St. Bernard, Hom. I. super Missus est.—We have already said that Joseph was descended from the royal family of David, and that he had been reduced to an humble condition. Josephus, the Jewish historian, in the second book of his Antiquities, assures us that the Jews, in their marriages, did not consider fortune and honors, but genealogy, which was established for the occasion of marriages. The exercise of a trade, or the condition of a shepherd, did not detract from noble blood. With great wisdom, they required only irreproachable conduct, the practice of moral virtues, which inspired the people with the greatest veneration. We read that, even among the Gentiles, virtuous men were preferred to those who possessed wealth. Now St. Joseph, poor in the goods of this world, was very rich in virtues; hence he merited to become the spouse of the august Mother of God.



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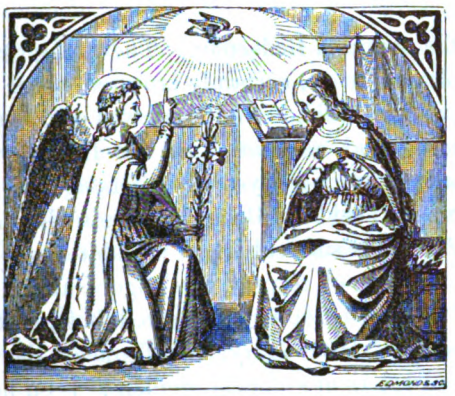
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CHAPTER II.

ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE Virgin dwelt with Joseph, her spouse, in the city of Nazareth, and they both led a most pure life, devoted exclusively to the practice of all virtues, when it pleased the Eternal* to ear the vows and prayers, which for so many ages had been raised to him by all the just, and to give

* It is difficult to determine the time which elapsed between Mary's marriage and the Annunciation. There are two opinions on the point, without counting that of those who believe that the Blessed Virgin was saluted by the Angel future Mother of the Messias before leaving the temple. Some say that she did not yet live with Joseph, and that, according to the custom of the Jewish women, she dwelt with a relative; others affirm that she was then in the house of her spouse. The latter seems the more probable opinion. In fact, if Joseph married Mary only to be a veil covering the sublime mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and protect the life and honor of the Blessed Virgin immaculate, there was no necessity for the angelic message being longer delayed, since nothing could in the eyes of men now dishonor the miraculous conception of Christ; and these are precisely the reasons which induce many to say that the Annunciation took place four months after Mary's marriage with Joseph. See Trombelli, Part II. diss. x. where he discusses the point fully.

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the world the promised Redeemer. The young virgin of Jesse, dear and blessed maid, certainly crowned those prayers and desires, as we have said. And Mary was completely absorbed in the reading and meditation of the Holy Scriptures, and perhaps had before her eyes that passage of the prophet Isaias, where it is said: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son." Then suddenly light inundated her humble cell, and in the attitude of respect, the angel Gabriel,* one of the highest of the blessed spirits, appeared before her in human form, and said: "Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women;" † on hearing these words, the humble Virgin was troubled, not knowing what manner of salutation this might be. "She was astonished," says St. Augustine, "at these unwonted expressions, till then unheard." ‡

For our part, we cannot be astonished that Mary was called "full of grace," since that was her peculiar characteristic. "In truth," says St. Bernard, "we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that Stephen was full of grace, and that the Apostles themselves were full of the Holy Ghost; but Mary was full of grace in a far different way: the fulness of the divinity did not dwell in Stephen as it dwelt in Mary;

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* The archangel Gabriel, whose name signifies "power of God," was entrusted with the greatest messages. We read in the holy Scriptures, that he explained to Daniel the visions of the ram, and goat, and the mystery of the seventy weeks, and announced the birth of St. John Baptist.

† Luke, i. 28.—Mary alone, says St. Ambrose, was saluted "full of grace." Debbora had saluted Jahel, after the latter had killed Sisara, "Blessed among women be Jahel, the wife of Haber the Cinite;" Judges, v. 24. And Booz salutes Ruth, "Blessed art thou of the Lord, my daughter." Ruth, iii. 10.

‡ St. Ambrose, Lib. II., in *Lucam*. "For well is she alone called full of grace, for she alone obtained the grace of which none other was worthy, that she should be filled with the author of grace."

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and the Apostles did not, like her, conceive of the Holy Ghost." *

Mary might be called full of grace, from having been conceived without sin, and been raised above all creatures by a special grace. Now Mary had always corresponded so well to that grace, that the angel with truth saluted her, "full of grace," a fulness, to which no other creature ever could or will attain.

The gentle Doctor, considering this trouble, says again: "The Virgin is troubled, but she is not confounded. . . . She is troubled, she keeps silence, and asks what this salutation means. Now to be troubled shows modesty; not to be confounded, fortitude; and to be silent, prudence. The prudent Virgin knew that the angel of darkness often transforms himself into an angel of light, and as she was humble, she could not think that an angel from heaven would visit her; hence she asked herself what manner of salutation this might be."

In order to give a salutary counsel, we think it well to cite here in their own words, the observations of the Fathers in regard to Mary's trouble. "Learn," says the same St. Ambrose, "what should be the conduct and modesty of virgins. A virgin should fear, be troubled at the approach of men, beware of their converse. Let women learn to imitate this beautiful example of modesty. Mary was alone in her chamber, hidden from the eyes of men, visible only to an angel

* Hom. III., super Missus est.—The fulness of grace was given also to other saints, as we see in the Holy Scriptures; but their fulness was far different from Mary's, inasmuch as grace is proportioned to the office and dignity to which the person is raised. Now can there be a dignity on earth more elevated than that of Mother of God? Then Mary, who was to conceive and bear him who was full of grace and truth, must have had the greatest fulness of grace that it is possible to have here below.



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. . . . and that no word unworthy of her should sully her ear, it is an angel that salutes her. O virgin, learn to avoid improper conversations, on beholding Mary fear even an angel's salutation."

St. Jerome writes almost the same to Laeta: "Let your daughter imitate Mary, who, found alone in her room by the angel Gabriel, was troubled because, contrary to her custom, she saw a man, that is, an angel in human form."

St. Bernard justly says: "True virgins should ever be fearful, and the better to escape what is to be dreaded, avoid even what is permitted. They should remember that they carry a precious treasure in a vessel of clay, that it is difficult to live angelically among men, and converse on earth like heavenly spirits. Let them, then, in every new unexpected event always dread some snare, some device for their ruin." *

Mary, as we have said, often conversed with angels; hence it was that God did not send her a prophet or a venerable man to announce the divine Incarnation. If she was troubled, it was because the angel assumed the human form,† which, according to the Fathers, was resplendent in beauty, splendid in attire, admirable in bearing, terrible in air. Hence the humble virgin was troubled at the appearance of this unexpected messenger.

Thus at the sudden apparition of the angel, or rather at this

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* St. John Damascenus says the same, in different words: "In manners severe, tempered with cheerfulness, giving no man access to thee; witness thy fear at the unwonted address of the angel. (Orat. I., in Nativ. B. M. V.)

† St. Thomas (Pt. III., quæst. 30, art. 2) says, that it was becoming, for three motives, that an angel should bear the divine message to Mary: 1st. Because God is accustomed to communicate his will to men by the ministry of angels. 2d. The first woman having been tempted by an angel, redemption should be announced by an angel. 3d. It was proper that to the pure and immaculate Virgin a pure and immaculate ambassador, an angel, should be sent.

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new mode of salutation,* the Virgin of Nazareth was troubled; as it is said: "She was troubled at his saying." The angel, seeing her trouble, encouraged her: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever."

Consoling words! ardently desired accomplishment of a promise which God made to Adam in the beginning of the world. Hence the angel affirmed to Mary that she was full of grace,† that the Lord was with her by means of the Incarnation,‡ and that she was blessed among women. In these

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* Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Thomas, St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, and many others, adopt, with good reason, this last opinion. Manue (Judges, xiii. 22), Daniel (Daniel, x. 8), Zachary (Luke, i. 12), were also troubled at the sight of an angel. Mary, who often enjoyed the society of angels, could not be troubled at the appearance, but at the salutation, of the angel Gabriel. "She was not disturbed at the vision of the angel," says the angel of the schools, "but through wonder at what she saw, for she had no such magnificent thoughts of herself."

† St. Bernard (in Serm. in Dom. infr. Oct. Assumpt.) says: "Ave, Maria, gratia plena; bene plena, quia Deo et angelis et hominibus grata; hominibus per fœcunditatem, angelis per virginitatem, Deo per humilitatem. In hoc tertio a Domino se respectam testatur, quia humilia respicit et alta a longe cognoscitur? St. Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Annunc.*, says: "Maria sic plena dicitur gratia, quod in illa Virgine totius gratiæ thesaurus reconderetur."—Mary is called full of grace, because in that Virgin were hidden all the treasures of grace. St. Bernardine of Sienna (Serm. 52, art. 11, ch. 1), thus speaks of the fulness of Mary's grace: "Tota gratiæ plenitudo quæ est in Christo, in Maria venit; in Christo sicut in homine personaliter deificato, in Maria sicut in templo Christi Verbo singulariter dedicato."—All the fulness of grace which is in Christ comes in Mary; in Christ, as man personally deified; in Mary, as in a temple especially dedicated to Christ the Word.

‡ Some interpreters believe that Gabriel said to Mary, "The Lord is with thee," by anticipation, as the angel said to Gideon before the battle, "The Lord is with thee, O most valiant of men." (Judges, vi. 12). St. Augustine, explaining the

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words are contained great mysteries of wisdom, as we shall see by examining the opinions of the Fathers and Doctors. First, the angel bids Mary not to fear, reminding her how dear she was to God; for to find grace before God, is nothing else but being loved by God.* Moreover, the angel by these words wished to show her that she was dear to God, because she had obtained by her prayers the promised redemption, and had recovered the grace which Eve had unfortunately lost; † and to show her that she was to bear a real man, and not a phantom, as some infidels have pretended, in order to destroy the profound mystery of the Incarnation, he added, that she should bear this child in her womb like all women, and that she should be its mother.‡ Then to show her what were to be the distinctive characteristics of that son, the angel said, that the child should be called Jesus, and added, that he should be great, that he should be called the Son of

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words, thinks that the angel means to say to Mary, The Lord is with thee, more than with me; for while he abides with me in the way of grace and glory, he dwells in thee as son and spouse.

* Thus in Holy Scripture we read, that Noe "had found grace before God." (Gen. vi. 8.) Lot says, "My Lord, because thy servant hath found grace before thee." (Gen. xix. 19.)

† St. Bernard says (Serm. IV., de Assumptione B. M. V.): "Hæc est enim quæ totius mundi reparationem obtinuit, salutem omnium impetravit: constat enim pro universo genere humano fuisse solicitam, cui dictum est: Ne timeas, Maria, invenisti gratiam: gratiam utique quam quærebas."—For this is she who has obtained the restoration of the whole world, obtained the salvation of all; for evidently solicitous for the whole human race was she to whom it was said, "Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace; the grace truly which thou didst seek."

‡ In the time of Cardinal Cajetan, as he attests (St. Thomas, Pt. III., quæst. xxi. art. 5), Rome condemned the error of those who said that the body of Christ had been formed in the Virgin's heart of three drops of blood. Some also have pretended that the child was already conceived by Mary when the angel appeared. We see how false this opinion is, by the consent which Gabriel expected from the Blessed Virgin before the Incarnation took place.

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the Most High, that he should ascend the throne of David, and that his reign should be eternal.*

Reassured by these words, the Blessed Virgin gave entire credit to the angel. She did not act like the incredulous wife of Abraham: knowing the prediction of Isaias, which she was perhaps meditating, as we have supposed, at the moment when the angel appeared, but not knowing, perhaps, how a virgin could bring forth, moved at the same time by a profound love for that virginity which she had consecrated to God, and for which, according to the opinion of all the Fathers, she had also renounced the incomparable honor of the divine maternity, she replied to the heavenly messenger: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" †

This means: "How can this be done, if I have hitherto remained a virgin, and if, by God's help, I am resolved to persevere as such all my life, according to my oath? Nor am I vowed to Virginity alone: Joseph, whom God has given me as a guardian and a brother, is bound by the same promise." Then the angel, answering with respect, said: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee:" that is to say, before and after giving birth to a son, thy virginal womb shall remain intact. This profound mystery will ever be above

* See ISAIAS, ix. 6. "For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace; he shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom: to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice."

† This question of Mary to the angel was not the effect of distrust, but of inquiry, as St. Augustine says, in his 20th Sermon: "Non de effectu dubitavit, sed qualitatem ipsius quæsivit effectus . . . quia ergo vidit eam quærentem, non diffidentem, non se negavit instruentem."—She did not doubt of the effect, but asked the quality of the effect . . . therefore, because he saw her asking, not distrusting, he did not refuse to instruct.



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human reason, like so many mysteries in nature.* Who can measure the power of God? And here, to give Mary a greater proof, or, as St. Bernard says,† to add miracle to miracle, and joy to joy, the angel continues: "And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren." ‡ As if he would say: fecundity in an aged and sterile woman, is a miracle as great as fecundity in a young virgin; God is the supreme author of nature, and all the laws which he has established, are always dependent on his will.§

Behold, then, the fortunate moment when Mary's free consent is expected, a consent which is to occupy so important a part in the redemption of the human race. All generations past and to come, turn their eyes to this new Eve; ‖ the

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* St. John Chrysostom, commenting on these words, says: Let us not go further; let us seek no more; let us not ask how the Holy Ghost operates in the Virgin; for if we do not understand the mysterious operations of nature, how shall we be able to understand those of the Holy Ghost? ... I know that Christ was conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and I know no more ... Neither Gabriel nor the Evangelist can tell us more.

† Hom. IV., super Missus est.

‡ The Hebrew word, Elizabeth, means sacrament of God. Elizabeth, being of the family of Aaron, was a near kinswoman of the Blessed Virgin; it is not easy to determine in what degree they were related, as the Latin word *cognata* merely expresses the fact of relationship.

§ Benedict XIV. and with him other theologians, believe that Mary, when she was saluted by the angel, was in Joseph's house at Nazareth. She was alone in her room, according to St. Ambrose in his second book on St. Luke, and St. Bernard in his third homily on the Missus est; so that the favored spot of the colloquy was the house still venerated at Loretto. See Benedict XIV., De Festis.

‖ The sentiments of the Fathers on the request for this consent are admirable. "Answer, O holy Virgin," cries St. Augustine; "why keep the world in pair.? The angel awaits thy answer: thou hast heard what is to come to pass; the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High overshadow thee; that is to say, becoming a mother, thou shalt still be a virgin. ... But she replies, and the instant the angel returned to heaven, Christ entered the nuptial bed, and in the Virgin's womb put on the garment of the flesh." St. Bernard says: "Thou

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wind is lulled; a profound silence reigns around; the angels that keep it hang on her very lips. If she keeps silence, if she does not consent, the cause of the human race is for ever lost; and the gates of heaven closed for ever. . . . The Blessed Virgin keeps her eyes riveted on the earth, she bows down her beautiful face, and humbly opening her rosy lips, said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word."* And the angel departed from her to bear to heaven the joyful tidings; and it was at that very moment, that the Eternal Word of the Father became incarnate in Mary's immaculate womb, and dwelt amongst us.

"O thrice, four times happy moment," exclaims a learned Bishop; "moment which gave the Virgin a son, the world a Saviour, man a model, sinners a victim, angels a chief, the divinity a temple, the Eternal Father a new adorer, his Son a new nature." †

The conception of Jesus Christ took place miraculously, and in an instant. The Eternal Son of God penetrated the

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hast heard, O Mary, thou shalt conceive and bear a son by the operation of the Holy Ghost; and the angel awaited thy answer, and with him we await from thee a word of mercy, because we groan under the sentence of our condemnation. On thy lips depend the consolation of the wretched, the ransom of slaves, the deliverance of those condemned to eternal death; in fine, the salvation of all the children of Adam." St. Fulgentius says: "As Satan, by means of the serpent, spoke to Eve, and by her eyes brought death into the world, God, by means of the angel, spoke to Mary, and brought life to all ages. The angel spoke, and the Virgin conceived Christ. Mary became the restoration of women, since by Mary they have been withdrawn from the curse caused by Eve."

* By these humble words Mary consented to become Mother of God. "O profound humility," says St. Bernard; "Mary, after having been raised to the august dignity of Mother of God, proclaims herself 'handmaid of the Lord!' It is little to be humble in abjection, but humility in glory is the sublimity of virtue." St. Ambrose also remarks the humility of Mary, who, chosen to be the Mother of God, calls herself "his handmaid," and is not puffed up at the sublime promise made her.

† Incontri, Archbishop of Florence, Treatise on the Feasts of the B. V. M.

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Virgin's womb, as a pure ray of the sun penetrates a crystal, without tarnishing, without breaking it, leaving no trace of its entrance or passage,* and with the substance of Mary's purest flesh and blood by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, the body of our Redeemer began to be formed in her womb. Thus was effected the hypostatic union with human nature, that is to say, the union of the divine and human nature in Jesus Christ.†

By the incarnation of Christ, an infinite glory redounded to God, for the offence done his justice was entirely repaired, from the price of the person offering to give him satisfaction, a price which millions of worlds and men could never have equalled. Besides, God wishing all creatures to render him glory, there was no means more worthy than the union of the divine nature and our feeble nature, worthily glorified in the person of the Incarnate Word. In fine, thus were accomplished all the prophecies which for more than forty centuries had promised man a Redeemer of fallen humanity.‡ Not only

* St. Augustine, always ingenious and sublime, institutes this beautiful comparison: "Solis radius specula penetrat et soliditatem ejus insensibili subtilitate pertransit, et talis videtur intrinsecus, qualis extra. Itaque nec cum ingreditur violat, nec cum egreditur dissipat; quia ad ingressum et regressum ejus speculum integrum perseverat. Speculum ergo non rumpit radius solis; integritatem Virginis ingressus et regressus vitiare potuit Deitatis?" *Serm. III., de Adventu.*— The rays of the sun penetrate a mirror, and with insensible subtlety pierce its solidity, and seem alike within and without. Therefore, neither entering does it violate, nor departing fracture, because when it enters and departs the mirror remains entire. The rays of the sun, then, do not break the mirror; could the entrance and egress of the Deity vitiate virginal integrity? *Serm. III., de Adv.* With what force, clearness, and precision, has he explained the ineffable prodigy of Mary's virginity with regard to her conception and birth of her son!

† The Word was made flesh . . . not by the conversion of the Deity into flesh, but by the assumption of humanity into God . . . Christ is one God and man . . . not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. (St. Athanasius' *Creed.*)

‡ According to the apostolic traditions, the festival of this mystery is established on the 25th of March, as well in the Western as in the Oriental Churches; witness

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was the Incarnation of the Word a great glory for God, but the mother received an honor, a glory, an accumulation of merits, such that, as the angelic doctor tells us, she was raised to the highest degree of perfection. In fact, a Virgin who becomes a mother, who conceives, and brings forth without sullying her purity, is a prodigy of prodigies, miracle of miracles. He, whose mother she is, cannot but be a God, and consequently, God must elevate, draw her to him, as far as it is possible to draw human nature to him.

St. Bernard, considering the divine maternity, says that two prodigies took place at once; a God obliged to all the duties of a son to Mary his mother, and a woman possessing over that man-God all the rights which appertain to the dignity of a mother. It is enough, then, to say that Mary is the Mother of God, to give the highest idea of her. We see in her an Immaculate Conception, an unexampled Virginity, a prodigious humility, and other marvels of grace which superabound in her heart. Now all these prodigies, all these prerogatives of Mary, flowed from her divine maternity. By reason of this august dignity she is called Queen of heaven and earth, Mother of Mercy, our consolation, our hope, our refuge, in one word, our all. "There are in Paradise," says St. Anselm, "apostles, patriarchs, prophets, confessors and virgins; all are powerful with God, and I have great confidence in their prayers: but, O Virgin, what they all united with thee can do, thou canst do without them; for thy protection is all powerful, because thou art the Mother of our Saviour, the spouse of God, the Queen of heaven and earth:

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the menology of the Greeks, the calendars and martyrologies of the Copts, Chaldeans, Syrians, the Latin martyrologies, breviaries and missals, the Sacramentary of St. Gregory the Great. (See BENEDICT XIV., *De Festis, art. de Annuntiatione.*)

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if thou art silent, all keep silence ; if thou prayest, the whole world is in prayer with thee." *

Yes, all this power, all these privileges, come to Mary from the sacred bond of flesh and blood which unites her to God ; and she may justly say : " All the good things that are in me, flow from the divine maternity ; all my riches come from Jesus Christ."

Terminating this chapter, we delight to remark with the Fathers of the Church, that Mary, endowed with all virtues, pleased God by her humility, and that she conceived by her virginity, " humilitate placuit, virginitate concepit." For a heart to be entirely filled with God, it must be empty of all other affections, and this takes place by holy humility ; and as virginity was a virtue preparing for the divine maternity, we may say that Mary conceived by her virginity. Justly, then, does St. Bernard exclaim, that God wishing to have a mother, it was necessary that he should be born of a virgin ; and a virgin become a mother could not have any but God for a son.†

Let us then acknowledge with admiration and gratitude the great prodigy, accomplished in this creature, who was chosen amid all the daughters of Adam : let us see to what degree of grandeur the human race was raised, and become, in some sort, partakers of the divine nature ; let us raise our soul to the pinnacle of dignity ; that is to say, let us labor to make ourselves worthy of the name of Christian, and so far, worthy sons of that divine mother.‡

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* Orat. XLV., ad sanctissimam Virginem Mariam.

† Sermo in Annunt. Beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis.

‡ The Church has always been so deeply penetrated with the divine mystery of the Incarnation, that she not only refers to it in all her prayers, as the source of all graces, and the principle of all other mysteries, but has also instituted a particular prayer, to which we are invited by the sound of the bell, and which is recited

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three times a day, morning, noon, and night. It is believed that this prayer was instituted in 1316, by Pope John XXII., and that King Louis XI. introduced it into France in 1471. We know that St. Charles Borromeo recommended preachers to explain it frequently to the people, and to recite it themselves before the sermon. He moreover inscribed in the acts of the Synod, that it should be recited, thrice a day, at the sound of the bell. (Acta. Med., Pt. IV., *Instruct. prædicat. Verbi Dei.*) It is a duty, then, to thank God, according to the desires of the Church, for the incomparable benefit of the Incarnation, and to have recourse to Mary's intercession by piously reciting the angelical salutation, which is composed in part of the words which the angel brought from heaven, in part of those of St. Elizabeth to the Blessed Virgin, and of the words which the Church has added. It is the best prayer that we can say in honor of our dear Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary.







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CHAPTER III.

THE VISITATION.—MARY AND ELIZABETH.

NOW is the season of flowers; all nature, after the harsh winter, seems to rise again to bless its Creator; and Mary, the holy mother of God, leaving the home of Joseph, her spouse, went to visit her dear cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zachary the priest.* Mary undertook this journey, not to be convinced with her own eyes, as some heretics have pretended, of the miraculous pregnancy of Elizabeth, but to rejoice with her, as St. Ambrose says,† at the miraculous accomplishment of the desires of both, to render her cousin all the good offices which charity required more than the tie of flesh and blood, and finally, to obey promptly the

* The sacred text does not mention the time when Mary visited Elizabeth; but as the Evangelist, after recounting the Annunciation, says, "Mary arising up in those days went into the hilly country with haste" (Luke, i. 39), it follows that this journey must have taken place about the beginning of April, since the Annunciation, as we have said in the last chapter, is ascribed to the 25th of March.

† In Luc., Lib. II., n. 19.

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inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Thus in Mary's rapid journey appear three principal virtues: devotion,* humility, and charity.

This journey of the Blessed Virgin may be considered either as to its undertaking or its accomplishment. The Virgin hastened to undertake it, says St. Ambrose again, in order promptly to obey the impulses of the Holy Ghost; she accomplished it rapidly, adds Albertus Magnus, because, being a modest virgin, she wished as soon as possible to escape from the eyes of the public, and because she felt an earnest desire to see and revere her cousin Elizabeth.†

And truly, says St. Gregory, the more we love a person, the more we make haste to arrive, so as to see him the sooner.‡

The Gospel does not speak of the company which Mary had on this journey. We willingly adopt the opinion of those who affirm that St. Joseph alone accompanied her, and that he then returned home, knowing that Mary was to remain longer with her cousin: for living by the work of his hands, he could not, like her, remain far from his city of Nazareth. In fact, how could Joseph permit the young Virgin, confided to his care, to go alone over those mountains? Was it not equally proper that Joseph, become the spouse of that illustrious Virgin, rather than confide her to any member of his family, or hers, should himself accompany her to her relatives, as illustrious for their piety as for their wealth and rank in the city of Hebron? For at Hebron the most esteemed writers place the residence of Zachary and Eliza-

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* This virtue consists principally in the promptitude in serving God, and scrupulous solicitude to do all that he commands.

† *Comment. on Evang. Luc. in verb.* Abiit cum festinatione.

‡ Hom. XXII., in Evang.

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beth.* We may also believe that Mary had informed Joseph of the miraculous pregnancy of her cousin, or that he had learned it otherwise, for all must have talked of the miracle; or finally that Heaven revealed it to him, as some maintain.†

Most of the Fathers and historians think that, on the arrival of the chaste spouses at Zachary's house, Joseph, according to the Hebrew custom, occupied an apartment remote from that of Mary, who employed her time with the maid servants in the works of her sex, and that the couple met at certain hours of the day for the common acts of life. We may accept this opinion, unless with some we prefer to believe that Joseph understood nothing of the mysterious words that passed between Mary and Elizabeth at their first interview, as the disciples often did not understand our Saviour's words, although he several times repeated the same thing.‡

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* The Holy Scripture says only that the Blessed Virgin went to the hilly country of Juda. The mountain cities, where Zachary might have lived, are many, especially if we believe that he was not obliged to reside in a sacerdotal city. For our part, we adopt the opinion of Baronius (*in Appar.* adann. § 77), of Toledo (in Luc. Annot. 116), of Calmet (in Luc. 39), of Samuel Basnage, and many others, whom it would be tedious to enumerate. Moreover, we know that Hebron, once called Chebron, and frequently Cariatharbi, a sacerdotal city, was situated in the mountains of Juda. (Josue, xiv. 12–14, xxi. 13.)

† Those who think that Joseph did not accompany the Virgin on this journey, rely, 1st, on these words of St. Luke, "before they came together," that is to say, before the Virgin dwelt in the same house as her husband; 2d, because Joseph, being poor, could not leave his work long; 3d, that if he had accompanied the Blessed Virgin, he would have understood, by the words of Elizabeth and Mary's canticle, that his spouse was the Mother of God. We maintain the contrary opinion, for all the reasons that we have given, and will give in the course of the chapter.

Some think that Mary, in this journey, also visited Jerusalem, in order to thank God, in the temple, for the great benefit of redemption. This last opinion, however, needs proof.

‡ Although we may suppose that Joseph had gone to the chamber of Zachary, and during the first moments was conversing with him, it is ridiculous to suppose,

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However this may have been at Hebron, it is of faith that the first interview of the Blessed Virgin and Elizabeth was very solemn. On learning that her dear cousin had come, Elizabeth went forth to meet her, and embraced her with sentiments of the most lively affection. Her lips were mute, because she could not express all the emotion which she experienced. The august Virgin was the first to salute her, for she never lost a favorable occasion for exercising humility. "One cousin," says St. Ambrose, "comes to see another, a young maiden an aged woman; not only does she come first, but first salutes, because a virgin should be the more humble as she is more chaste." *

The salutation and embrace are immediately followed by a singular prodigy, for wherever the Blessed Virgin was, grace flowed in abundantly. As soon as the pious Elizabeth was in the arms of the Virgin, as soon as she heard the sweet voice of the daughter of Jesse, the child whom she bore in her womb leaped, and gave evident signs of joy. "Consider," continues St. Ambrose, "consider the exact distinction which the Evangelist makes in the words of Elizabeth, the mother of the Precursor; Elizabeth hears the voice, and forthwith John experiences the grace. She heard in the order of nature, he leaped by reason of the mystery. The one felt the coming of Mary, the other that of the Word. . . . Elizabeth and Mary spoke of grace, and grace operated interiorly on John. . . . The mothers spoke, and a double miracle was accomplished. John leaped, when the mind of Mary is rav-

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as some have done, that Joseph could not have heard this memorable colloquy, because he had gone to put the ass in the stable. Had Zachary no servants? Was it not more becoming that Joseph should, before all, accompany his spouse and present her to her relatives?

* In Luc. ii., n. 22.

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ished with joy; John is filled with the Holy Ghost, and in turn fills his mother." *

This Holy Spirit, passing from the son to the mother, completely invested her, so that she immediately began to prophesy; hence she exclaimed: "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Now Elizabeth could not have addressed this salutation to Mary, had she not been divinely inspired; for Mary, so far as outward appearances were concerned, was the wife of a poor mechanic, and nothing without revealed the Mother of God. But the prophecy of Elizabeth did not end here; she adds: "Blessed art thou that hast believed,† because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord;" which amounts to saying: "Blessed art thou because thou hast believed the angel, believed that thou shalt be Mother of Him to whom the Lord will give the throne of David his father, who shall reign for ever in the house of Jacob, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end."

At this sublime and prophetic language of Elizabeth, the Blessed Virgin did not remain silent; but she, too, filled with

* The Fathers and Commentators agree in saying, that John was then purified from original sin. And in fact, how could Christ and sin be united? How could John have recognized the presence of Christ, if he had not been at that moment endowed with reason and free from sin? Suffice it to invoke the authority of St. Athanasius, whose opinion was expressed in the Council of Ephesus (LABBE, *Concil. III.*): "Multi ergo sancti fuerunt et mundi a peccato: Jeremias et ab utero sanctificatus est, et Joannes cum esset in utero exultavit in gaudio voce Mariæ Theotocæ."—Many saints therefore were cleansed from sin: Jeremias was sanctified from the womb, and John, enclosed in the womb, exulted for joy at the voice of Mary, Mother of God. St. Cyril adds: "John alone, enclosed in the womb, leaped for joy; and though he saw not his Lord with his bodily eyes, acknowledged him in spirit." *Catech. III., de Bapt., n.* 6.

† Some Latin Fathers, adopting the Greek text, transfer the words from the second to the third person: Blessed is she that has believed, &c.

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the Holy Ghost, intoned that divine canticle which clearly alludes to several passages of the Old Testament, and especially those which recall the departure from Egypt. This canticle, according to St. Thomas of Villanova,* surpasses in majesty, elevation of style, all the other canticles of Holy Writ. In fact it is full of sublime mysteries, prophecies, divine science, inscrutable secrets. What author can ever be compared to Mary, who is the Queen of prophets? What greater proof of the Eternal Word who was in her? † We shall give this canticle in her very words, only paraphrasing some passages according to the Fathers and interpreters.

The Blessed Virgin replied thus:

"My soul doth glorify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;‡ because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; § for behold, all generations shall call me blessed: ‖ for he that is mighty hath done great

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* Sermo de Visitatione.

† Because the Magnificat hath ten verses, some have pretended that this canticle had been predicted by David, when he exclaimed, "To thee, O God, I will sing a new canticle; on an instrument of ten strings I will sing praises to thee." Ps. cxliii. 9. Salmeron remarks, that we have three canticles on the great mystery of the Incarnation; Mary's, Zachary's, and Simeon's; the first, he says, is sung at Vespers, because Mary arrived at Hebron a little after mid-day; the second at Matins towards daybreak, because St. John, like the morning star, announced the sun of justice; the third at Complins towards evening, because Simeon, after seeing the Redeemer, asked only to die.

‡ The second verse is like a repetition of the first, because the Hebrews usually thus explained a thought already expressed.

§ Some translate, "God hath regarded and rewarded in me the virtue of humility:" but, as St. Bernard says in his 16th Sermon on the Canticles, the truly humble wishes to be considered humble, but does not proclaim himself to be so. See Toledo, Calmet, Martini, Blessed Cardinal Tommasi. (*Tom. VIII., Oper. in explic. Cantic.* Magnificat.)

‖ Hugh of St. Victor on the Magnificat says, that all generations shall proclaim Mary blessed, because by the fruit of her chaste womb, they recover the blessings lost by the fruit eaten in paradise.

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things to me, and holy is his name: and his mercy extendeth from generation to generation to them that bless him. He hath showed might in his arm:* he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.† He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel his servant,‡ being mindful of his mercy: as he spake to our fathers; to Abraham and to his seed for ever." §

After the first colloquy in which, as St. Ambrose remarks, the two happy mothers prophesied by a double miracle, from the spirit with which the children in their wombs were filled,

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* Bede (*Super Evang. Lucæ, ad hæc verba*) says, that his arm signifies his Son. Thus also may be explained the words of St. Paul: "Upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1. 3), and those of Isaias "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed" (Isaias, liii. 1). Many say that arm implies the idea of strength.

† To whom do these words allude? As to this, there are two opinions; some apply them to the angels fallen from their thrones, and become the enemies of man, others pretend that they refer to the reprobation of the Jewish people and the vocation of the Gentiles.

‡ Some believe that, Israel filio suo, may be understood in the double sense of the word, puer. It seems strange to say that God has received Israel, when all know the chastisement of that deicide people. But, as St. Augustine says, in his commentary on the 63d Psalm, in the spiritual sense Jesus Christ came to save them; in the temporal sense, to take care of them. It is solely their fault, if they have not profited by the doctrine of the Redeemer and returned his love.

§ Hugh of St. Victor says, that God was merciful in promising, and true in fulfilling his promise. Surely the Virgin could not better terminate her sublime canticle, than by recalling how from Adam to that day God had always manifested his mercy to men; the divine mercy was manifested in all the just, from the commencement of the world, whether we understand the word mercy in the general sense, or understand by it the Incarnation of the Word, which is called mercy in Holy Writ. "Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us." (*Canticle of* ZACHARY.) "Show us, O Lord, thy mercy, and grant us thy salvation." (Psalm lxxxviii.) Justly, then, does St. Augustine, in his treatise on the Magnificat, say: "This is that mercy which God showed to them that feared him, that he sent into the world his Word, assuming flesh."

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we cannot but believe that they had other pious entertainments, such as holy souls have with each other: for Mary also wished to leave us an example of what our conversations should be, always having God as their principal end, even when they are as an agreeable relaxation to our mind.

O what joy, what consolations, these two blessed souls undoubtedly experienced, entertaining each other on the goodness and mercy of God, which had never been better displayed.* As the Holy Scripture merely says that Mary remained about three months with Elizabeth, each may freely conjecture what we shall set forth in the course of this chapter, on the authority of the Fathers and Doctors, who, as we have promised, shall constantly be our witnesses and guides in the course of this history. We accordingly say, that after her interview with Elizabeth, Mary was presented to Zachary by her cousin, to whom Zachary, on his side, presented Joseph; † and thus these holy persons, after conversing together, sat down in the Lord at a frugal table; and Joseph, after a slight repose, set out again for home, commending his most holy spouse to the care of her cousins; not that she needed care, but because he knew well the precious treasure which he left in that dwelling. Joseph, although always resigned to the divine will, must nevertheless have experienced great sadness, as he returned alone by the same path in which he had so

* We believe that this mysterious colloquy between Mary and Elizabeth was not the only one which they had with each other, because pious souls are wont to live recollected, and to communicate with simplicity of heart the graces with which the God of mercy is pleased to enrich them.

† The silence of Holy Scripture does not weaken our opinion, but, on the contrary, seems to confirm it. Thus Joseph is not mentioned in the passage of the sacred text, where it is said, "And entering the house, the wise men found the child with Mary his mother" (Matt. ii. 11); and yet all agree that Joseph was present.

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shortly before followed his well-beloved spouse; and Mary doubtless felt the separation no less keenly: but like him, submitted humbly to the divine will.

What motive, then, induced the Blessed Virgin to remain so long with her cousin? St. Ambrose explains it by saying: "Mary was not detained near Elizabeth by the sole motive of mere friendship, but she remained also for the spiritual advancement of the great precursor of Christ; for if at Mary's arrival, if at the first sound of her voice, the child leaped for joy in his mother's womb, and if the mother herself was at the same time filled with the Holy Ghost, how must grace and heavenly gifts have increased both in mother and child during the three months of Mary's presence! After the example of the athletes, the holy prophet by the unction of grace, prepared for the combat.*

We cannot say with certainty whether Mary did or did not await Elizabeth's delivery, because St. Luke, who has left us an exact account of this visit, does not mention the fact; yet according to the context of the Evangelists, it seems not, inasmuch as St. Luke concludes his account before relating the birth of St. John the Baptist. Some commentators think, moreover, that it was unbecoming in a pure young virgin like Mary to be present at the delivery: yet other Fathers, and by far the greater number, affirm that the Blessed Virgin was present at the Precursor's birth; for, they say, his birth, which was to be attended with so many prodigies, must have been honored by the presence of the divine Mother; and they add that Mary remained with Elizabeth till the ceremony of the circumcision.† After that, according to the same opin-

* In Luc., c. 1. lib. I.

† See CALMET on the first chapter of Luke, and CORNELIUS A LAPIDE on the 50th verse of the same chapter. The Church now celebrates the feast of the

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ion, we must believe that our Blessed Lady took leave of her cousin, and that after having for three months sanctified that dwelling, she left it attended by some relative, or rather by Joseph, who had come for her. She returned by the same road to her house in Nazareth, where, inflamed with divine love, and ever more devoted to the practice of virtue, she prepared to give to the world the Messias so ardently desired.

Visitation on the 2d of July, that is to say, the day after the Octave of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, because about that time Mary must have returned to Nazareth. This feast is very ancient in the Oriental Church. It was instituted in the Western, by Urban VI., it is believed with a vigil; at a later date, Pope Boniface IX. only recommended it. In the forty-second session of the Council of Bale, the celebration of this feast was fixed on the 2d of July, and Saint Pius V. reformed the office. Saint Francis de Sales instituted, as all know, a religious order, which took the name of Visitation of Mary.



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CHAPTER IV.

THE ANGEL APPEARS TO ST. JOSEPH—THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND HER CHASTE SPOUSE PREPARE FOR THE REDEEMER'S BIRTH.



HAPPY, a thousand thousand times happy, the man who fears God, who puts all his trust in God, abandoning himself entirely to God's infinite and mysterious providence. The just man has nothing to dread from the injustice of men, for God, always faithful in his promises, guards and defends him. Need we here recall Joseph, Jacob's son, avenged from calumnious imputations, and Daniel and Susanna, and so many other examples, that meet us at almost every page of the Holy Scripture and the history of the Church? We find an evident proof of this divine protection in the signal manner in which God defended Mary's honor and dispelled Joseph's mistrust.

Joseph had been again united to his most chaste spouse but a few days when he perceived that she was with child. It is more easy to conceive than to express how this idea alarmed this just man. He admired indeed in Mary the summit of all virtues; he beheld her entirely circumspect, modest, recol-



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lected; he regarded her as a model, a mirror of perfection. Merely by beholding her, he felt his heart filled with divine love: but naturally he could not contradict the testimony of his own eyes. Yet he did not dare to mention it to the Blessed Virgin, for fear of giving her pain by suspecting her fidelity, although the natural evidence was against her, as St. Bernardine of Sienna remarks.*

We are not ignorant that according to some the Blessed Virgin revealed the mystery to Joseph, before going to visit her cousin, and the motives they assign are quite plausible. Yet it is sufficiently proved by the text of St. Matthew and by the revelations of St. Bridget, that Mary observed silence on the point.† We shall see why she concealed the divine mystery from her spouse.

St. Bernardine of Sienna, meditating on this conduct of Mary in regard to her husband, whose disquiet she might easily have dissipated, learnedly teaches that she kept silence to please God, because God's secret should not be revealed; that, moreover, the Blessed Virgin knew that the mystery was known to St. Elizabeth, and that God in his own good time would make it known to whom he wished. To these wise considerations may be added the humility of Mary, and the merit which the two spouses derived from their affliction; for with all his care to conceal from Mary the trouble

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* Erat firmissimum argumentum naturæ ex tumefactione uteri. *Sermo de S. Josepho.*

† The illustrious Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, thinks that the Blessed Virgin revealed all to Joseph; 1st, because it seems more suitable that the husband should know the mystery before Elizabeth; 2d, because the tie of kindred between Mary and Joseph was closer than between Elizabeth and Mary; 3d, because, he says, if the Holy Ghost, at the salutation of Mary, descended on Elizabeth, how could it but have descended on Joseph, who was still better disposed for grace, and who was to be the guardian and perpetual companion of Mary?

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which he felt, Mary must have perceived it and divined the cause.*

Theologians differ in opinion as to the subject of Joseph's fears. St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Euthymius, and others think that Joseph, convinced that Mary had been unfaithful,† wished to fly from her. Others, with St. Jerome, believe that Joseph, although deeply afflicted at a fact which he saw with his own eyes, never decided as to the cause; that even as St. John Chrysostom says, he would have believed that a virgin might bear a child rather than believe Mary in fault.‡

Others, in fine, believe that Joseph wished to leave his espoused wife, only because he deemed himself unworthy to dwell with the mother of God, who had already revealed to him the mystery about to be accomplished in her. Origen, Theophylact, St. Basil, St. Bernard, St. Remigius, John Gerson, Eck and many others § are of this opinion; yet it needs too great violence to the sacred text, to be induced to believe that Joseph's fear sprang simply from his respect.

Be that as it may, it is past all doubt that the grief of Mary's spouse was inexpressible, for he felt that he suspected a person so dear to his heart, so tenderly loved, a spouse in

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* Already cited.

† This fault of Joseph, if it took place, was very innocent, and in the intellect, consequently permitted, as God permits the grievous falls of St. Peter and other saints.

‡ *Hom. I., in Divers.*

§ St. Bernardine of Sienna, with other Fathers, observes, that St. Joseph might easily have assured himself of the fact, by asking Mary, his holy spouse. And why did he not? He would not have asked, for in such a case her mere word would not have dispelled all doubt; 2d, that he might be informed by a heavenly revelation, which he could believe. (*Serm. de S. Joseph, art.* 2, *c.* 1.) This shows how little confidence we can place in the sixth oration of Proclus, patriarch of Constantinople, and on the assertions of Athanasius and Germanus, also patriarchs of that See, on this point. TROMBELLI, *Pt.* 1. *Dissert.* xiii. *ch.* 2.

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whom he found not the shadow of a fault. "But what was Joseph to do?" exclaims St. Peter Chrysologus; "was he to dissemble the conception?" But as St. Jerome justly remarks, the law forbid it. Should he accuse Mary? His heart did not permit him so to treat his partner, and the guardian of the Blessed Virgin could not do aught that would diminish even for a moment the value of that spotless purity of which he was the most faithful witness. As a vessel surprised by a tempest amid the ocean floats to and fro, and is equally exposed to destruction whether it unfurls its sails or casts anchor, so Joseph wavered in heart and knew not what to do: whether he should remain with his betrothed or surrender her to the law, his pain is equally great. But God never abandoned his faithful servant. It is his work, he can derive his greater glory from the mutual anxieties of these two spouses.

Joseph had at last resolved to leave Mary secretly,* thus making an actual divorce. He had already made all his preparations for departure, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." And the heavenly messenger went on to say, that Mary should bring forth a son; who should be called Jesus, and who should deliver his people from their sins.†

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* If St. Joseph wished to leave her secretly, it follows that he was already living with her; for we cannot leave what we have not taken; and besides, God would not have sufficiently protected Mary's honor, had she been found pregnant before being united to her spouse. Moreover, the Latin word *accipere* may very well be understood in the sense of guard. See our remarks in the first chapter of the second book.

† Quod enim in ea *natum est* de Spiritu sancto est. The word is properly "is born," and the Evangelist uses it, as St. Basil remarks, in his Sermon on the Nativity of our Lord, to show that the child was animated from the very moment of

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In these words, two things are to be considered; first, that the angel does not say to Joseph, Mary shall bear thee a son, as he had said to Zachary; and the reason is very clear; John was, in fact, and by nature, the son of Zachary, while Jesus was the true son of Mary, but not the son of Joseph. The second is, that the angel prophesied the effect that the birth of Christ should produce for the world, which was to deliver all men from the chains in which they groaned wretchedly. In fact, St. Matthew, after relating the words of the angel, recalls to our mind the prophecy of Isaias: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel." *

Joseph, on awaking from this happy dream, doubtless experienced great joy, but his confusion could not have been less great. He rejoiced to see every cloud of suspicion disperse from around her who was inexpressibly dear to him: he rejoiced to learn that the longed for fulness of time had arrived, and that God had at last heard the prayers of so many generations, who had for so many ages implored the heavens to "rain down the just one;" he rejoiced, because, according to the divine promise, so beautiful a branch was to be produced from the long withered royal stock of David. He rejoiced because it was given him to see, to contemplate the Incarnate Word, to bear him in his arms, to press him to his heart; he rejoiced. . . . but what tongue can recount all the joy of Joseph! His heart, which loved Mary and God truly, alone could tell the unspeakable consolation with which it was filled. Doubtless the happy spouse communicated to

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the Incarnation. Hence St. Augustine, in his Manual, says: Natus est Christus de Spiritu Sancto non sicut filii, et natus est Christus ex Maria sicut filii.—Christ was born of the Holy Ghost not as children are, and Christ was born of the Virgin Mary as children are.

* Matthew, i. 22.



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his chaste partner the angel's words, and begged her pardon for the suspicions which he had entertained.*

But Joseph's confusion was not less than his joy. He accordingly humbled himself before God, acknowledging the humility of Mary, who preferred appearing guilty to declaring herself Mother of God: he humbles himself, meditating on the abasement of a God come into the world in the form of a slave: he humbles himself, thinking how, according to the prophecies well known to him, this God would have to suffer here below to accomplish the work of Redemption: he humbles himself, in fine, considering what a glory it would be for him to be recognized on earth as the father of Jesus Christ, father not by nature, but by grace.

St. Augustine says well, that "St. Joseph was truly the father of Jesus Christ, not by having begotten him, but in the sense that he had adopted him as such, and that the infant God was born of his marriage." † The same holy Doctor, speaking elsewhere of these holy spouses, says: "Both deserved to be called parents of Christ: Joseph was the father in the spirit only, Mary was mother both in the spirit and the flesh. They were parents of his humility, and not of his sublimity; of his infirmity, not of his divinity." ‡ And truly, as we learn by the sacred text, Joseph was esteemed and revered by all as the father of Christ, and exercised over him all the rights and duties of a father.

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* Some cannot understand how St. Joseph, although he knew that the Messias was to be born of a Virgin, and knew Mary's virginity, did not believe her to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word. It is easy to answer: 1st, Because the Holy Scriptures speak of a Virgin, a word generally understood of an unmarried woman; 2d, Because, as Mary's humility prevented her from supposing herself worthy to be the Mother of the Messias, so Joseph did not deem himself worthy to be raised to the honor of adoptive father of the Redeemer.

† *De Consen. Evangel.*

‡ *Lib. de Nup. et Concup.*

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And here each one may easily imagine with what pious respect Joseph, from that moment, treated his beloved spouse, in whose womb he adored Him whom the very heavens could not contain; the more so as Mary, according to some Fathers of the Church, shone with such splendor, as she advanced in her pregnancy,* that the humble Joseph did not venture to look upon her radiant face, till the day when she bore her divine fruit. This fact seems to us by no means improbable; if no one could look upon Moses, after his heavenly converse with God, in which, after all, he heard only the voice of an angel, what shall we say of that Blessed Virgin who bore God in her womb?

Speak as much as we will of Joseph's holy respect for Mary, and their preparation for the Redeemer's birth, we shall always say little; if we blend in them all the love of the saints that have been, are, and shall be on earth, we shall still say little; if we imagine in their hearts the most sublime dispositions, we shall still say little compared to the greatness of this couple, most beloved of heaven, and soon to represent on earth the Most August Trinity.

The Evangelist, after relating the dream, says, "Joseph, rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife And he knew her not till she brought forth her first-born son."

At the first glance, these words seem to present a meaning at variance with Mary's perpetual virginity.†

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* ALBERTI. Commentaries with life, doctrine, and miracles of Christ and the ever Immaculate Mary. Vol. I. ch. VIII.

† Matt. i. 24–5. This form of expression, here as in other parts of Scripture, has no reference to the future, as the Fathers and Doctors have shown; St. Jerome on the first chapter of Matthew, says: "Because it is written 'before they came together,' it by no means follows that they afterwards came together; but the Scripture shows what was not done." See St. Isidore of Damietta (Ep. 31, Book

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To guard and defend our most holy Mother's spotless honor, we shall here offer two things for devout consideration: first, that according to Saint Augustine,* in the fourth month of the pregnancy of the Blessed Virgin took place the nuptial ceremony, as described by us in the first chapter of the second book, and as to the time of which we are still in doubt, since it is not easy to know with certainty whether it took place, or to form the concord of the gospels, or at least to explain them. The second is, that Joseph did what the angel commanded: Now since he only ordered him not to fear: "Fear not," there was no occasion to counsel the non-fulfilment of the vow. Then, if Christ is called the "first-born," it is only *formally*, according to the expression of theologians.

Moreover, we shall in the following chapter speak again of the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Meanwhile we think that we shall please the reader by telling how the Church, wishing to unite her heart to those of the chaste spouses in the expectation of the Redeemer, instituted the feast of the Expectation;† not only in order to honor the

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III.); St. Hilary, cited by St. Thomas in the Catena Patrum; the author of the imperfect work on Matthew; and Father Rovere detto Rothario, (Lez. I. Mor. X.) St. Hilary also remarks that in the Holy Scriptures whenever the Blessed Virgin is mentioned, she is not called Joseph's wife, but always MOTHER OF JESUS, and also that for a son to be called first-born, it is sufficient that he be the only child of his mother. This word first-born, employed by the Evangelist, also contains a great mystery, for it shows that in Christ were united all the rights of primogeniture, princedom, priesthood, and heirship, conferred on that first-born who was figured in the first-born of the old law, and of which the Apostle says that when he was introduced into the world by the Father, all the angels were commanded to adore him. ST. ISIDORE OF DAMIETTA, ST. EPIPHANIUS. *Hæres.* 78.

* *De Concord. Evang.*

† Gregory XIII. in 1578, approved the festival of the Expectation for the churches of Spain, whence it passed to other churches. At last, in 1725, Bene-

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ardent desires of Mary, but also in order to obtain by her intercession, that the Holy Ghost may enkindle in us similar desires, and that we may thus celebrate with fruit, the holy Nativity of Jesus Christ. For this, too, are recited those beautiful anthems, those aspirations,* in which, by representing to our Redeemer our darkness, captivity, and ignorance, we invoke him as the light, the wisdom, the liberator, pastor, king, and redeemer of our souls.

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dict XIII. established it in the Roman church, and the Pontifical states, appointing the 18th of December for its celebration. BENEDICT XIV. *De Festis.*

* The pious reader will read with pleasure these aspirations, which may serve as a prayer preparatory to the Nativity of our Divine Redeemer.

O Wisdom, who camest out of the Most High reaching from end to end mightily, and ordering all things sweetly, come teach us the way of prudence.

O Adonai, and chief of the house of Israel, who didst appear to Moses in the fire of the burning bush, and didst give him the law on Sina, come to redeem us with an outstretched arm.

O root of Jesse, who standest a signal to the nations, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, whom the Gentiles shall beseech, come and deliver us—do not now delay.

O key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel; who openest and no one shuts; shuttest and no one opens, come and deliver from the prison-house, the fettered sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death.

O Orient, brightness of eternal light, and sun of justice, come and enlighten those who sit in darkness, and the shadow of death.

O King of the Gentiles, and desired by them, the corner-stone who makest both one, come and save man whom thou hast formed out of the slime of the earth.

O Emmanuel, our king and law-giver, the expectation of the Gentiles, and their Saviour, come to save us, O Lord our God.

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CHAPTER V.

JOSEPH AND MARY'S JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. BIRTH OF THE DIVINE REDEEMER.

THE time marked in the eternal decrees for the birth of the Messias had come at last; the day was soon to arrive, and the hour to strike, when the only Son of God, the Eternal Word, would put on our mortal flesh. All nations impatiently expected the great event; traditions of it were spread over the whole earth, and had been preserved by the posterity of the children of Noe, though encompassed by mythological fables. Hence the slightest singular fact excited the greatest attention, for in it the world expected to see realized the ancient prophecies of Jacob, Daniel, and Isaias.*

* The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he cometh that is to be sent" (Gen. xlix. 10). "Seventy weeks are shortened." (See Daniel ix. 24.) "Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." (Isaias vii. 14.)

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Paul Orosius * relates that when Cæsar Augustus entered Rome, to take possession of the perpetual tribuneship to which the senate had raised him, a fountain of oil burst forth in the public hospice, and spreading for a day overflowed the Trastevere ; † he adds that, on the return of the same Cæsar from Apollonia to the capital of the world, a halo of light was seen around the sun about the third hour, and doubling the splendor of that luminary. Orosius says too, that Augustus, after going through the city in a triumphal car, closed the gates of the temple of Janus, thus renewing the example given by the consul Titus Manlius more than two hundred years before ; and finally, that on his fourth journey to Rome, the same emperor forbid any one daring in future to call him patron. These, and many others which in astonishment men admired and could not explain, were, says the same writer, nothing but manifest signs of the actual or speedy birth of the Redeemer. In fact, the oil which gushed forth for a

* Book II. ch. 18.

† The public hospice, where provisions were distributed to invalid soldiers, near Mount Janiculum. The immortal Benedict XIV., in his learned work, De Festis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, already so frequently cited, relates that the oil gushed forth all day long, and considers it a miracle. Here Alexander Severus, in the third century, permitted the faithful to raise a temple to God in honor of the Blessed Virgin, which was always held in great veneration. This temple was called sometimes the Basilica of Calixtus, Julius I., Cornelius, and sometimes "St. Mary's at the fountain of oil;" it is now commonly called *Santa Maria in Transtevere*. Morelli, a learned historian of that church, in the sixth chapter of his book, proves by sound arguments, that Calixtus I. built it on the site of the public hospice, thus showing the truth of the prodigy we have mentioned. This basilica was for several centuries the residence of the Popes; it has an illustrious chapter of canons and prebendaries, and enjoys many privileges, especially that of being substituted for *St. Paul's extra muros* during the year of the Jubilee, when the latter cannot be visited as one of the seven churches to gain the indulgences. Leo XII., of happy memory, in 1825 substituted it for the basilica of Ostia, just previously destroyed by fire, and now almost rebuilt through the care of Gregory XVI., and Pius IX., now happily reigning.

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whole day in the capital of the world, was the symbol of Christianity spread over the whole world; for in Greek, CHRIST means *anointed;* the increased splendor of the sun signified the diffusion and effulgence of the light of the divine doctrine, confirmed by miracles, till then unheard of; the closed doors of the temple of Janus were a sweet presage of the peace brought to men by the Messias, called in Scripture the PRINCE OF PEACE; and the emperor, by refusing him to be called *patron*, confessed that HE was already born on earth, who is the true, only, absolute patron of all causes.*

The prophet Micheas had foretold that Bethlehem was the blessed soil, on which the Saviour of the world was to be born.† Yet the Blessed Virgin, who had at last reached the



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* It was the general opinion in the time of which we speak, that a reparator, an extraordinary man was to be born, who would reconstruct society. The fourth eclogue of Virgil *Sicelides Musæ*, applies to the Redeemer better than to Pollio to whom it is addressed, so much does the bard of Mantua presage the wonders of the reign of Jesus Christ. Suetonius, in the life of Vespasian, relates that it was then an universal opinion that men from Judea would become masters of the world. We know, moreover, that Titus, John of Giscala, and many others were taken for the promised Messias.

† "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." (MICH. v. 2.) Micheas is the only prophet who predicted the spot where the Saviour was to be born. Of him the scribes and priests learned it when Herod asked them in order to answer the wise men. Bethlehem means a city of bread. This city of Palestine is situated eight leagues from Jerusalem; it is called Bethlehem of Juda, to distinguish it from another of the same name, in the tribe of Zebulon. Micheas calls it Ephrata, from the name of the mother of its founder. We may remark that St. Matthew, citing this prophet, says: "Thou art not the least among the cities of Juda," while Micheas, on the contrary, had called it "a little one." St. Jerome seems to us to reconcile this apparent contradiction, by saying that St. Matthew related the words, not as written by the prophet, but as cited to Herod by the scribes and priests; which proves the great ignorance of these doctors, who, wishing to explain one of their prophets, could not do it without altering the text. Bethlehem then, undistinguished for greatness or trade, became very celebrated as



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term of her pregnancy, and her chaste spouse Joseph, resided at Nazareth; and there seemed to be no ground for presuming that the august couple would change their abode. But how petty are the judgments of men! God always disposes events according to his profound and mysterious designs. He inspired Augustus to order a census of the subjects of his empire;* and as, among the Hebrews, the people were

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the Redeemer's birth-place. Some have asked why, since Jesus came into the world in Bethlehem, a city belonging to the tribe of Juda, he was called in Scripture a Nazarene or Galilean, and as such given up by Pilate to Herod. We answer with St. Thomas (3. p. q. 35. art. 7), that he was so called, not from his birth-place, but from the place where he was brought up, and grew to manhood.

* And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled . . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, &c." Thus the fact is related by St. Luke. The Scriptures mention two censuses of the people. The first is that which David ordered Joab to take (II. Kings xxiv. 2), "Go through all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Bersabee, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of them." The second was made by Augustus when Cyrinus was Governor of Syria. (Luke ii.) St. Justin and Tertullian say that the registers of this census existed in their time in the archives at Rome. As the first census had no motive but pride, David was punished after the people had been counted; for the Almighty sent a pestilence upon Israel. The second census is admired and praised by all the holy Fathers, and all the Doctors, on account of its sublime result. Although not exempt from pride, this census, ordered for the levying of troops, was to aid in the fulfilment of a celebrated prophecy. Thus, as we read in the Proverbs, all creatures serve for God's glory. The Fathers and Commentators make beautiful remarks on this edict. It will suffice us to say with St. Gregory, that at the birth of Christ the census of the world took place, that it might be a symbol of the census of the just written in the book of life by Him who appeared in the flesh. Mary, who was pregnant, was inscribed with her spouse Joseph. Some think that the name of the child was also inscribed, as, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, had ordered to be done with pregnant women. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the most august personages that ever existed on earth, were inscribed in the registers of the Roman empire, and voluntarily submitted to a law which, as we have said, did not regard them.

This Census of Syria was taken, as the sacred text states, by Cyrinus, Governor of Syria. As no profane author mentions it, several controversies have arisen

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divided into tribes and families, the emperor wished each one to be enrolled in the city whence his family had come. Now Mary and Joseph were descended from the race of David, son of Jesse, who abode at Bethlehem; there, then, the descendants of the prophet King were to be enrolled.* Although it is required the head of the family only to inscribe his name; the Blessed Virgin journeyed to Bethlehem, guided, either by the remembrance of Micheas' prophecy, or induced, by her unwillingness to separate from her spouse and guardian. Thus, to obey the order of a foreign pagan prince, an order which did not concern them, Mary forgot the pains and dangers of the journey, the rigor of the season, her poverty, and the maturity of her divine fruit. Carrying only some swaddling clothes in which to wrap the child, when born, these blessed spouses set out for Bethlehem.†

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to conciliate them with the text of St. Luke. Casaubon in his work on Baronius, and others believe that Cyrinus spoke of it in the ten books, now lost, of the only history which we had of the Emperor Augustus. We readily adopt the opinion of Benedict XIV., who on the faith of the gravest authors, believes that Cyrinus, a man of consular dignity, was sent by Augustus with extraordinary powers, at a time when Sentius Saturninus was governor of Syria. If this opinion is admitted, Tertullian does not contradict St. Luke, when he tells us that the census was made by Saturninus, Governor of Syria.

* According to the Fathers, and most learned Commentators on the Bible, it seems that this was the reason why the two spouses were inscribed at Bethlehem, and not that advanced by others, that Mary and Joseph had some property in that city. In fact David is called a Bethlehemite in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Kings.

† Some think that the Blessed Virgin rode on an ass, and painters so represent her on this journey. Those who maintain the opposite opinion, say that the two spouses went on foot out of respect for the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and because, as St. Fulgentius in his sermon on the praises of Mary, St. Bernard in his Homily on the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse, and other Fathers say, Mary received no inconvenience from her pregnancy, and maintain that she who conceived of the Holy Ghost must have borne her divine fruit without inconvenience, and brought it forth without pain.

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They journeyed four days, according to Dom Calmet, because the city of Bethlehem is about ninety miles from Nazareth.

The nearer they approached the desired day, the more ardent became their sighs, and the Virgin panted with holy hope, to see at last with her eyes the blessed fruit of her womb; the regenerator of the nations, the restorer of fallen humanity, the Eternal Word of the Father; to print with respect her fond kisses on that countenance of heaven, to press to her heart that dear little babe, to adore the only Son of God, the Word arrayed in our mortal flesh, thus first teaching the Church to prepare worthily for the mystic celebration of the divine Nativity, as in fact, the Church, since those days, has never omitted to prepare each year.

But it is time to relate how the Saviour of the world was born. The two spouses arrived then at Bethlehem, but could find no shelter there, so full was it of strangers. Repulsed from one inn, they went to another; in vain did they implore hospitality, an asylum of any kind; in vain did Joseph endeavor to excite pity for his companion, so soon to be a mother; both bore with unspeakable humility the indignant refusal. At the same time they admired the infinite goodness of Our Lord, of whom the Evangelist St. John has said: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." *

At last, seeing themselves without shelter, and not wishing to remain in the public road, they turned to a rustic grotto which met their eyes; † here they entered with joy, thinking

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* John i.

† Was the Redeemer born in or out of Bethlehem? What was the nature of the spot? These are controverted points. Many, with Cardinal Baronius, maintain that he was born, as seems most probable to us, in the suburbs of Bethlehem, which formed part of the town. Eusebius Pamphilus relates that a field was shown near Bethlehem, where the Blessed Virgin was said to have brought forth her di-

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that they might at least here await the coming day. Night was in the midst of her course, all nature was calm and silent, when the Blessed Virgin informed her chaste spouse that the moment of her divine delivery was come.* Joseph through respect left the grotto, as St. Bridget relates.

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vine Son. The shepherds who were guarding their flocks in the fields are another proof. Moreover, as the city of Bethlehem is situated in a rocky mountainous country, with hostelries for travellers, stables for beasts of burthen, and flocks outside, it seems probable that the spot where our Lord was born, was one of these stables cut in the rock. Indeed, St. Jerome, whose authority is of the greatest weight, leaves us no doubt on the point. In his 108th letter to Eustochium, he says: "At the foot of stony Bethlehem is a stable cut in the rock, with its crib, for the use of beasts of burthen, and there it is that the incarnate Word was born." See BIANCHINI, *Dissert.* 1. *de præsepe et cunis D. N. J. C. in basilicam Liberianam trans'atis.*

* The interpreters, commentators and mystics do not agree as to the circumstances of the divine Nativity, for the Evangelists are silent as to it. Some think that St. Joseph was present at the birth. Others say that the angels themselves presented her Divine Son to the Blessed Virgin; others assign her a midwife or companion. See BARONIUS in his notes on the Martyrology on the 25th of December; BENEDICT XIV., *De Festis*, where the divine delivery is spoken of, and the reader will find reasons which make such an opinion inadmissible.

In the account of the Redeemer's birth, we have followed in preference the sentiment given in the revelations of St. Bridget, the authority of which we have shown.

Although our object in writing the life of our most dear Mother is not to display erudition, but devotion and filial love, we shall continue, as we deem proper, to discuss at length the principal questions that may arise.

The universal Church celebrates the commemoration of the Nativity of Christ on the 25th of December. Some think that the Redeemer was born in another month, and are in favor of January, March, April, or September, yet the opinion which fixes his birth on the 25th of December seems best founded. As to the hour, it is beyond all doubt, that Our Lord was born at night, since the sacred text says: "The shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock." We may also conclude by analogy, that he was born at midnight, from these words of the Book of Wisdom, xviii. 14. "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, thy Almighty Word leapt down from heaven, from thy royal throne, as a fierce conqueror into the midst of the land of destruction." In fact, at that hour of midnight, the Word, by his wisdom, delivered the Hebrew from the bondage of Egypt, by putting to death all the first-born. So

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The Blessed Virgin took off her sandals, untied her hair, and knelt down with her face to the crib ; her gaze turned to the east. Then she raised her hands and eyes to heaven, and was ravished in ecstasy. In this divine rapture of love, with unspeakable joy and heavenly purity, she brought forth. Humbly inclining her head, clasping her hands over her heart, full of respect and love, she adored the divine babe ; for she saw in that fruit of her chaste womb, the eternal Son of the Father ; although she beheld him naked on the ground, all benumbed with cold, she durst not approach him. Hence the little child, as if to give its mother courage, began to cry, and, as though it wished to implore her aid and compassion, lovingly turned its eyes, and stretched out its little hands towards her. Then humility was overcome by maternal affection. Mary took her newborn son in her arms she contemplated him, lavished on him a thousand caresses, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and suckled him. Joseph, at the sudden effulgence which illumined the stable, supposing the Messias to be born, entered hastily, his countenance bedewed with sweet tears ; he adored the child divine, and blessed the Almighty for having enabled him to behold the Incarnation of the uncreated Wisdom. Their desires are satisfied, but not sated ; in Joseph's presence, Mary lays the infant in the crib, on the straw, between an ox and an ass,* which were in

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too, did he choose to deliver at midnight, the sons of Adam from the bondage of Satan.

This opinion too, is confirmed by the Church, which celebrates the Nativity of our Redeemer at the very hour of midnight, which is not the case with other feasts.

* It is an ancient tradition, referred to by many, that there were an ass and an ox in the blessed stable. There is a beautiful dissertation on the point by Father Charles Verallone, a Regular Clerk of the order of Barnabites, in the second series of Annals of Religious Science. The author there maintains this opinion, with profound eruditicn, and shows its truth, first, by the testimony of the

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that blessed stable, or rather, earthly paradise, inasmuch as the blessed spirits there beheld the Word, who is God, in the bosom of the Father, and whom they adored as truly their sovereign Lord, although invested in our mortal flesh, he lay humbly in a crib.

And here, before pursuing our narrative, we will tell what a superabundance of graces such a delivery, in an instant, brought to Mary ; and how she preserved perpetually pure and spotless the lily of her virginity.

The woman, blessed above all women, was not Mother of God by a figure, by name, by adoption, or by grace merely, as Joseph is called father of Jesus, or our Redeemer calls brethren all those who do the will of his Father ; but she was in fact, and nature, the Mother of the Redeemer ; because she conceived, and bore him, nursed and brought him up, as all other mothers do their children.* Now if Mary, as we have already shown, was adorned from all eternity with the most signal graces, so as to be worthy to become Mother of God ; if this treasure of graces became a thousand times richer when she conceived by the Holy Ghost, it must, according to the opinion of the Fathers, have increased wonderfully, when she began to live familiarly with that only

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Fathers, who are the true depositors of religious traditions, and then by the venerable authority of ancient monuments.

* The Council of Ephesus defined against Nestorius that Mary is truly Mother of God. Although there are two distinct natures, the divine and human in the Redeemer, yet his person is one and undivisible. To show that the Blessed Virgin is justly called, not only Mother of Christ, but also Mother of God, St. Cyril uses the example of St. Elizabeth, who is called not only mother of the body and soul of St. John the Baptist, but also Mother of the Precursor ; so Mary is the true and natural mother of the Incarnate Word, both God and Man ; God, because he is of the same nature and substance as the Father, according to his eternal generation ; man, because he assumed human flesh, and a human soul in his mother's most chaste womb.

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Son of God, and became, so to speak, one with him.* She thereby not only perfected herself in the most exquisite virtues, but also acquired a natural right to the obedience of the Son, and the Blessed Virgin then began to exercise that most compassionate office of advocate for sinners, and true mediatrix between God and man. If, then, the Virgin of Jesse was really and naturally the Mother of Jesus Christ, she was not bound by the law to which all other women are subjected in childbed. But as we have already seen, in her Annunciation, the privileges with which she was adorned, and are impatient to enter on new mysteries, we shall merely say, that Mary, having been conceived without the spot of original sin, brought forth without pain, as Eve would have done, if she had not committed a fault, punished in all her posterity. Let us add that Christ came forth from his Mother's virginal womb, as he entered the room after his resurrection, the doors being closed : let us say more, that the virginity of Mary† was very noble in its principle, since it was produced by a perpetual vow, which the most ardent divine love inspired, and which she kept with the greatest perfection ; wonderful in its end, since from this virginity was born the new Adam ; admirable in its effects, since God employed this means to exalt, infinitely, the virginity of his glorious Mother.

The childbirth of Mary occurring amid the darkness, in so solitary a spot, in so humble a manner, at so late an hour,

* The Angelic Doctor (part 1. quæst. 25), calls this union *almost infinitely close*, and Dennis, the Carthusian, in his book on the praises of Mary, adds, that after the hypostatic union, there is none closer than that of Mary with her divine Son.

† St. John Damascenus, whose authority, selected from a thousand others, will suffice, says : "She remained a Virgin after her delivery, who ever remained a Virgin, and had no union with her spouse, but that of virtue. And how could it ever come to pass that she who had miraculously born a God, should love or seek aught but God? Far from us such a thought!" Justly then was the perpetual virginity of Mary defined in the sixth General Council.

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with no witnesses but the heavenly spirits, could not remain hidden from men, but was revealed to mortals that very hour. Some poor shepherds were keeping their night watch over their flocks in the neighboring fields; while conversing perhaps on the prophecy of Jacob, an angel suddenly appeared before them;* a divine light encompassed them, and they were seized with a great fear; but the angel calmed them, saying: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people! for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in the manger." He had not finished speaking, when thousands of heavenly spirits appeared, praising God, and singing: "Glory

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* St. Cyprian, *de Nativitate Domini*, Venerable Bede, *de Locis Sanctis*, and other Fathers too believe that it was the Archangel Gabriel who bore this happy tidings to the shepherds. According to St. Jerome, they were watching their flocks in the very spot where Jacob and David had guarded theirs, a spot called the tower of Ader. There are various opinions as to the number of these shepherds; the most received is that which supposes three. The pious St. Helena erected on the spot a church, called afterwards the Church of the Three Shepherds.

Manzoni in his ode on the Nativity, thus describes this invitation:

The heavenly envoy shuns the gorgeous halls,
Where hedged with bristling guards, the rich repose;
But to the Shepherds quick his radiant form reveals,
Men whose pure joy the vain world never knows.

Legions of spirits in the dusky night,
On quivering wings like circles widening round,
With ardor kindled to its utmost height,
"Glory to God" harmonious echoing sound.

Soaring aloft their chant swells wide and clear,
Till slow its echo dies within each hill,
Till the last murmur's lost upon the ear,
And all around the sheepfold has grown still.

Then, happy men, they seek the wretched grot,
Where, as just taught by that sweet angel's tone,
They find in swaddling bands and manger laid,
The King of Heaven, and hear his infant moan.

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be to God on high, and peace on earth to men of good will." And after the angels had again ascended to heaven, the happy shepherds, filled with unspeakable joy, lost not an instant, and came in haste to the inn mentioned, not to test by eyesight what the angel had told them, for they had the liveliest faith, but to be the first to adore the divine child. Now, they found him in that grotto as the angel had announced. Full of holy respect and admirable tenderness, they prostrated themselves before him, rendered him thanks for so great a mercy, happy to see Jesus and his holy Mother, who exulted with joy and love to see the august mystery of the Incarnate Word manifested to men.

The shepherds on their return related to their companions all that they had heard and seen that night; and as they confirmed their narrative by convincing circumstances and proofs, the news of the Messias' birth spread rapidly over the whole country, so that we believe we may truly say, that by the following morning, all the other shepherds with their wives and children, hastened to the stable of Bethlehem, bringing some little presents, according to the custom of poor people. Thus God, come on earth to assume our mortal flesh, would not at first show himself to the rich and powerful, but to the poor and little; and thus, from the first moment, he gave us the example of humility and abjection.



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CHAPTER VI.

CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS.—ADORATION OF THE WISE MEN.



WHEN God appeared to Abraham,* making him the wonderful promises which we read in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, he also instituted Circumcision, of which the patriarch was to give the first example: "And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, that it may be for a sign of the covenant between me and you. An infant of eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations: he that is born in the house, as well as the bought servant, shall be circumcised, and whosoever is not of your stock. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for a perpetual covenant. And the male whose

* Abram, afterwards called Abraham, that is, father of a great multitude, was born in the city of Ur in Chaldea, of Thare, a worshipper of idols. At the voice of God he abandoned his country, taking with him his wife Sara, and his father, who died at Haran.

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flesh of his foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people."* These words signify, that the uncircumcised shall be deprived of the noble prerogative of the children of Abraham, and that he should have no part in the divine promises made in that memorable covenant.

It is useless to set forth the various opinions given as to this mysterious rite. We shall only say, that one of the principal reasons for this precept was to prevent the descendants of Abraham from being confounded with other nations, since Christ was to be born of his race. Hence, as every one can see for himself, Christ was not bound by this law. But the Redeemer, come into the world to overthrow human pride, and give all, and in all, a striking lesson of humility and obedience, as in the journey to Bethlehem he had yielded submission to Cæsar, so now obeyed the law of Moses by circumcision; thus beginning in the eighth day of his life, to shed the precious blood, the last drop of which he was to pour out on Golgotha.

The Mosaic law did not determine the minister of circumcision; and we do not positively know, how long the divine infant remained in the grotto of Bethlehem; it is therefore impossible to say, where and by whom he was circumcised.† St. Hilary thinks that the circumcision took

* Genesis xvii. 11. Some Fathers and Commentators give a severer interpretation to this passage: believing that corporal and even spiritual death is meant.

† Circumcision according to the Hebrew rite, was performed neither in the temple nor synagogue, because it was not a part of the priest's ministry. It was usually done by the father of the family in presence of the nearest relatives; the instrument was not determined. St. Thomas thus speaks of it (Part III. quæst. 70): "It seems that the stone knife was not essential in circumcision, for it was not prescribed by the divine law, and the Jews, then as now, omitted to use it. If some used the stone knife, as we read in Exodus iv., and Josue v., it was a symbol of the spiritual circumcision, which was to be one day made by Christ, of whom it is said in the first epistle to the Corinthians, "And this stone was Christ."

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place in the temple of Jerusalem,* and that one of the priests, in the presence of Joseph and Mary, was intrusted with the ceremony, in which the child received its name. The common opinion is, that Jesus was circumcised in the grotto by Joseph. Following Tornelli, Gerson, and several others, we believe that he was circumcised at Bethlehem by an ordinary minister, a priest, according to some, appointed to circumcise children; and that the holy spouses willingly submitted to the consecrated usage; thereby, they not only gave good example, but also gave greater notoriety to the circumcision of the divine infant. Be this as it may, it is certain that the heavenly babe must have suffered exquisite pain, on account of the delicacy of his holy little body, formed expressly for suffering, and on account of the fulness of reason which was in him: † whence we may conclude that he shed at that moment copious tears.‡ The plaintive voice of the divine

Suarez says that circumcision was in use, not merely among the Jews, but also the Arabs, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Idumeans; these nations took it from Abraham, on whom God had enjoined it.

* Psalm xviii. This opinion, however, clashes with Leviticus, which forbids the mother, as unclean, to appear in the temple before forty days. It is true that Mary was not only unsullied in her delivery, but was even made purer. Nicephorus thinks that the circumcision took place in Joseph's house.

† St. Bridget says in her revelations (Bk. V. ch. 22), that the Blessed Virgin preserved with the greatest veneration these sacred relics of Our Lord; that on dying she recommended them to St. John and his successors; that in the course of time they were found in an unclean place, and remained there till the angel made the revelation. This took place, they say, at the time of Charlemagne. Some theologians have doubted the authenticity of these relics, affirming, that it is impossible to find, in any part of the world, any portion of that body which rose again after death without losing aught of its integrity. The illustrious Suarez (in II. p. t. II. q. 54. diss. 47), Dennis the Carthusian (*de Circum. hom.* 8), Cardinal Toledo (in Luc. II. 21), and others explain how this could happen without Christ's body losing any of its entireness. Cardinal Toledo confirms the fact by the miraculous relic long preserved at St. John Lateran, but carried off by a soldier in the pillage of Rome, in 1527, to Caleata, diocese of Civita Castellana, where she is still venerated.

‡ St. Bernard. *De planctu Virginis.*

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child, not only touched the pious soul of Joseph, but rent the heart of Mary, who, courageous indeed, but still a mother, offered to God, in union with her son, the first fruits of that precious blood. She felt in her inmost heart untold pain, for, as Saint Lawrence Justinian says, "she suffered more acutely, as she loved more devotedly." *

It was, however, a sweet consolation for Mary to be able to begin, from that moment, to call him JESUS,† a name already uttered by the angel when he announced the great mystery to the Immaculate Virgin. Holy and awful name! name fully comprising the whole character of the divine Redeemer! Well does Saint Bernard in his fourteenth sermon on the Canticles exclaim: "When I name Jesus, I recall that humble man, meek of heart, good, sober, chaste, merciful, in a word, that man adorned with all virtues, and at the same time, I represent to myself the Almighty God, from whom I expect all the assistance I need for my salvation."

With what vehement love, with what wonderful affection, with what veneration and faith, must not Mary have uttered the name! That dear and adored name was ever a sweet

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* *Lib. III. de Laudibus Virginis.*

† St. Thomas (3 p. q. 37. art. 2) says, that the name Jesus, which signifies Saviour, admirably becomes him who was to save the world. He adds, that it was a new name in the sense that its extension was universal; for the virtue of the eminent men of the Old Law who bore it, had saved only the Jewish people. Of all names given to the divine Redeemer, and they are a long list, no one is more expressive than the name Jesus, since, in two syllables, it expresses his divinity and most holy humanity. Truly does St. Paul say: "God hath given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 9–10). Let us adore and repeat this name, which, as St. Bernard teaches (*Serm in Cant.*), refrains the impetuosity of anger, dissipates the fumes of pride, heals the wounds of jealousy, extinguishes the flames of concupiscence, tempers the thirst of avarice; a name, in fine, which will save whoever pronounces it. (Rom. iv. 13.)

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balm for her in that pain, as in all those which she subsequently experienced.

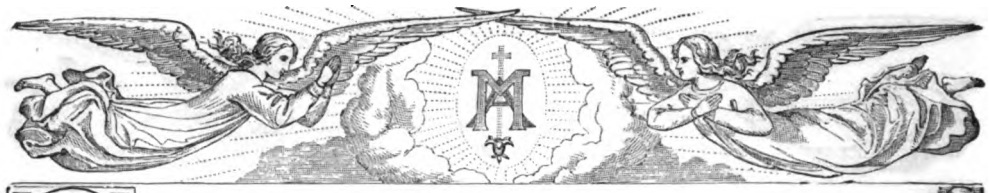
If the Redeemer on that blessed night when he came into the world, chose by the ministry of angels to reveal himself to the shepherds, he soon also manifested himself to the Gentiles by a sign which he set in the heavens. Isaias, eight hundred years before, had foretold the birth of the divine Redeemer with such clear words, that Saint Jerome calls them, not a prophecy, but a Gospel by anticipation. Now the son of Amos foretold, among other things, that Jerusalem should be "covered with a multitude of camels, dromedaries of Madian and Epha:" that "all they from Saba should come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praise to the Lord." * By this language, full of grandeur and prophetic rapture, the holy seer would show Christ's future glory, when the nations called to the faith should form but one fold, one flock, and have but one pastor; but at the same time he evidently alludes to the Wise men,† who came from

* Isaias lx. 6. See too David, Ps. lxxi. 10.

† Who were the Wise men and what was their number? This is a question not easily solved. James of Ausole says, that they were no other than Enoch, Elias, and Melchisedech, come from the earthly paradise to visit the Redeemer in his cradle. We will say that they might be called *Magi*, because they came from Media, whose inhabitants were so called from their being addicted to magic; or because they devoted their time to the study of astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy, for the word *magus* is synonymous with sage or astronomer. For our part we adopt the opinion of St. Thomas, who teaches (3. p. q. 36. art. 5) that the birth of Christ was manifested by a star to the Wise men, devoted to the contemplation of heavenly bodies; because, says St. John Chrysostom in his sixth homily on St. Matthew (*in verba* Ecce Stella), God wished to call them by the things which they were accustomed to see. Hence, a great glory redounded to the Messias, who, scarcely born, received the homage of the greatest and most learned men, after having received that of the humble shepherds.

Were they kings? Without mentioning the ancient paintings which represent them crowned with Phrygian mitres, and the prophecy of David inviting kings to adore the Messias, they are commonly believed such, on the opinion of the most

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the east to be the first adorers of the Divine Redeemer. "About that time, as they considered the starry skies, they beheld in the firmament a brilliant star,* which filled them

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illustrious and ancient Fathers, such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, Theophylact, and many others. Those who say the contrary, rely on the silence of the Evangelists, and on Herod's treating the Wise Men as inferior to him, and their departure from Bethlehem unattended and unnoticed. All these are brought forward by Hardouin, the ardent defender of every paradox.

Moreover, if the Wise Men were kings, they were not like those of our days, who in their journeys are followed by an escort; they were lords of a few villages or castles, and might travel with a slight retinue, like kings even now, when travelling *incognito*, the more especially as the Evangelist only mentions their presents: "We have come with gifts."

Authors agree in regarding them as three, although the number is not mentioned by St. Matthew. Cardinal Baronius (An. 1 Christi num. 30) says that it is a pious tradition of the faithful, based on the three kinds of presents, as St. Leo the Great attests.

Father Suarez (on the 3d pt. of St. Thomas, tom. III.) says that it is the common opinion of the Fathers, and sentiment of the Church, a sentiment supported by Benedict XIV. (*De Festis*). This common opinion, which was current in the 12th century, and as to which Baronius is perhaps purposely silent, gives them the names of Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar. It is an opinion entitled to respect, inasmuch as the Church honors them by those names. Bede (*in Collect.*) thus describes them: "First Melchior, old and pale, with long beard and hair, who offered gold to the Lord; second, Gaspar, young, beardless, ruddy, who offered incense, an oblation worthy of a God; third, Balthazar, a Moor with a long beard; he offered myrrh, which signified that the Son of Man was to die. They wore the Syrian costume." They were also called in Greek, Apheles, Hemerus, and Damasco; that is, faithful, humble, and merciful; in Hebrew, Galgalad, Magalad, Serachim; messenger, pious, and grace. They were also called Ator, Sator, and Parator; imaginary names, used in Magic, were also given them, as Casaubon relates (*Ex. iv. contra Baronium*). See Father Famazoni in the dissertation on the first translation to Milan of the bodies of the holy Magi. Among the learned letters of Sarnelli, is one in which he discusses what was the rank and profession of the Wise Men. Menochius also treats the matter at length.

* The learned ask what kind of star was the luminous body which appeared to the Wise Men; whether it was a meteor, a comet, or a star expressly created. Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Leo, with many other Fathers of the Church, hold for certain that it was a star then created. St. Thomas also (3 part. quæst. 36. art. 7) believes with St. John Chrysostom, that it was not one of the



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with great amazement. Yet they remembered the prophecy of Balaam, from whom they were perhaps descended, a prophecy according to which, a star was to arise out of Jacob; at the sight of that star, pressed by the interior grace which operated visibly upon them, they suddenly set out on their journey, after taking presents to offer, according to the oriental usage.

Their journey is supposed to have lasted thirteen days,*

stars of Heaven: 1st, because contrary to the usual course of the stars it moved from south to north; 2d, because it was visible by day as by night; 3d, because it was sometimes hidden; 4th, because it sometimes advanced, and sometimes stopped. They believe it then a star newly created by God, placed not in heaven, but near the earth, and moved by the divine will. The Fathers generally think that its mover was an angel, and some believe with St. Thomas, that it was the same one sent from Heaven to announce to the shepherds the birth of the Redeemer. Cornelius a Lapide (Comment. on Matt. ii. T. viii. 65) says that it was visible only to the Wise Men; and assigns for a reason, that if it had been seen by others, a great multitude of persons would have followed them, and would have raised Herod and all Judea against Christ. Cornelius a Lapide adds, on the authority of Nicephorus and Francis Suarez, that the star in the day time approached the Wise Men, and by night drew off and had less splendor.

* To determine well the time taken by the Wise Men to accomplish the journey, we must know precisely their starting point; now the Evangelist merely says that they came from the East. St. John Chrysostom, Theophylact, Saint Cyril, and Saint Basil say that they came from Persia, inasmuch as in the language of the Persians, philosophers are called *Magi*. Saint Peter Chrysologus, Saint Maximus, Theodore of Ancyra, and others, maintain that they came from Chaldea. Some fixing the spot precisely, say that they came from Mesopotamia; some from India, that is to say from Calcutta; and others from still more distant parts; so that according to these latter, the Magi would have taken two years to reach Bethlehem. For us on the faith of the most credible writers, we think that they were Arabians, disciples and perhaps descendants of the prophet Balaam, who had foretold this star, long expected by them. In thirteen days they could reach Bethlehem, and we believe it the more readily, as the queen of Saba had already come from those parts to see Solomon. All the country, in further Arabia, such as the land of Madian and Epha, was called Saba (St. Jerome. *De locis heb.*), and if the Wise men dwelt there, the prophecy of Isaias was fulfilled to the letter, not only as to the place whence the illustrious pilgrims were to come, but also to the gifts which they were to offer. "All they from Saba shall come bringing gold and frankincense."

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inasmuch as one can easily travel from Arabia to Jerusalem in that time with camels and dromedaries, which usually travel as far in one day as good horses in three. And in fact, when the gospel says, that they came in haste, we must believe that they took means to make the route as short as possible, under the guidance of the beneficent star, which, as the pillar of the cloud of old guided the Hebrews in the desert, now led to Palestine these illustrious persons, blessed first fruits of all the Gentiles. On arriving in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, they lost sight of the star, and unable to find it, entered the city. Introduced at once to Herod, in consequence of their high rank, they asked not whether the King of the Jews was born, but where, so great was their faith and so assured were they of his coming.

At this news, Herod,* the impious usurper of the throne of Judea, that vile courtier of the venal favor of the Roman people, was greatly troubled, and as the sacred text tells, all Jerusalem was troubled with him. Nevertheless, to be certain of the fact, who caused his trouble, he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people, asking them, where the

* Herod (which means *fiery dragon*) was son of Antipater, and altogether different from the other Herod before whom Our Lord Jesus Christ was sent by Pilate, at the time of his bitter passion. He was surnamed the Great, or the Ascalonite, because he was born at Ascalon, a city of Idumea. While still young he obtained of the Romans the government of Galilee. After the death of Brutus and Cassius whose side he had taken, he declared in favor of Anthony, who through the Roman Senate appointed him king of Judea, where no foreigner had reigned before him. Thus was verified the celebrated prophecy of Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Juda."

Anthony having been overcome in the famous battle of Actium, Herod, a man destitute of faith, immediately lavished such flatteries on Augustus, that the latter confirmed him on the throne of Judea. Having attained the summit of his desires, he found shame and misfortune in his own family. He sacrificed to his cruel suspicion his wife Mariamne, his sons, his relatives, and friends. Seized with a horrible malady, he died at the age of seventy.

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Messias was to be born. They replied, that according to the prophecy of Micheas, the king of the Jews was to be born in Bethlehem of Juda. The Wise Men were in exultation ; the king feigned to share their joy, to hide the wrath already kindling in his breast ; and the better to discover the truth, he called the noble pilgrims apart, and carefully questioned them as to the time of the star's appearing. Persuaded of the truth by their answer, he replied : "It is well, I rejoice at what you tell me ; be you my faithful messengers ; obtain exact information as to the child, and when, according to your desire, you have seen and worshipped him, return and tell me faithfully all that you have seen, in order that, like you, I may go and prostrate myself at his feet, with all the pomp of royal majesty." Thus spoke the perfidious king to these simple-minded men, who, doubtless supposing in Herod the faith which animated their own hearts, gave blind credence to his words. They accordingly promised to return, and, urged on by their ardent desire to see the Redeemer, took leave of the monarch in haste.

No sooner had they left Jerusalem, than they beheld the star again. Filled with a new joy, they faithfully followed its course, till, in its onward course, it stopped over the spot which was the limit of their happy journey. If this journey was of thirteen days' duration, as we have said, it is probable that the house over which the star stopped is that where the Saviour was born ; the more, as the Hebrew language, in which St. Matthew wrote his Gospel, calls any inhabited place a house, be it a cabin or a grotto like that of Bethlehem, as Father Hyacinth Serry shows,* and many examples prove.

St. Jerome in his letter to Eustochium, already cited, says

* Serry. *Exercitat* xxxvi. n. 6.

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formally, that Jesus Christ was adored by the Magi in the grotto where he was born. Baronius does not hesitate to give credit to the affirmation of the Holy Doctor, followed moreover by Saint Augustine, St. Peter Chrysologus, and many others,* so much so, that he blames those who maintain the opposite opinion.

Scarcely had the Wise Men beheld the unusual splendor of this grotto, than they entered full of respect ; and although they found only a babe and its mother, born in poverty and abjection, yet without any dread of being mistaken, they humbly approached him. St. Thomas of Villanova believes that the Blessed Virgin herself, on the arrival of these strangers, took up the divine babe from the crib in her arms, and the prostrate Wise Men adored at once the child and the mother.† Hence St. Bernard, inviting all nations to adore the King of glory, exclaims, in his sermon on the Epiphany, "Come, come behold the King of the heavens, crowned by his Father with the diadem of glory, and by his mother, with that of humanity." They remained some time absorbed in sweet contemplation ; and after giving free scope to their piety, they opened their treasures, and seeing, in the new-born child, the King of heaven and earth, Him who was to die for the salvation of the world, they offered him incense, gold and myrrh ; thus recognizing him as God, as King, and as a man of sorrows.‡

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* *Ad. Ann. Christi* 1.

† *Serm. de Epiph.*

‡ Among the orientals no one visited a king without a present, and we see an example of it in David's first visit to Saul. The Sacred Text says expressly that the Wise Men offered Jesus incense, gold, and myrrh ; there is then no possible doubt on the point. But theologians seeking reasons why such presents were offered, find two, one natural, the other mystic or spiritual. The natural reason is, that the Wise Men chose the most precious things in their kingdom ; in the book

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Mary wondered at such mysteries, and in God and with God, enjoyed the sweetness of the heavenly favors, concealing in her bosom the graces which she then received from her Lord. The Evangelist does not speak of what was said by the Wise Men in that holy grotto. As for our part, we willingly adopt the opinion of the writers, and especially of Saint Bernard,* who believe that the Blessed Virgin had

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of Sentences attributed to St. Bernard, it is said that they offered gold to relieve the poverty of the child. But how could the Wise Men suppose that they should find only a poor child in their search for a king? The most common opinion as to the mystical reason is that given in the text, which is that adopted by the majority of the Holy Fathers. Suffice it to cite St. Gregory: "The Wise Men," says he, "offered gold, incense, and myrrh; the gold befits a king; the incense is offered to God in sacrifice; and in myrrh the dead are embalmed. The Wise Men then acknowledged as at once King, God, and Man, him whom they adored." (*Hom. VI. in Evang.*) This the Church too proclaims, chanting in the Lauds of the Epiphany:

Regem Deumque annunciant
Thesaurus et fragrans odor
Thuris Sabæi ac myrrhæus
Pulvis sepulchrum prædocet.

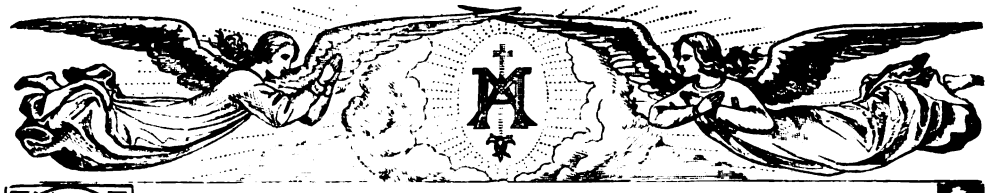
Offerings of mystic meaning!—
Incense doth the God disclose;
Gold a royal child proclaimeth;
Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.

Zachary of Chrysopolis gives these presents another mystical explanation. In gold he beholds wisdom, according to the words of Solomon: "Wisdom is an infinite treasure to men" (Wisd. vii. 14); in incense he beholds the virtue of prayer: "Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight" (Psalm cxl. 2); in myrrh the mortification of the flesh: "My hands dropped with myrrh" (Cant. v. 5).

Did a single one of the Wise Men offer all these gifts, or did each present a single offering as painters commonly represent them? As to this nothing can be positively said; there are opinions for each hypothesis. Yet we are inclined to believe with the learned Father Serry (*Exercit.* xxxiv. 4), that these presents having been offered by the Wise Men, as a symbol of their faith in Christ, acknowledged by them as King, God, and Man, it was necessary for the integrity of their faith, that each one should offer him the three gifts. It is true, however, that for this it would suffice that the will of each should concur in the offering of the others.

* Serm. III. in Epiph. Domini. cap. iii.

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long converse with these real sages, on the august mystery of the Incarnation, on the Incarnate Word, on the graces and admirable benefits of God, on the beauty and nobleness of virtue, and, finally, on the means of attaining true perfection. The Evangelist St. Matthew, says St. Bernardine, does not speak of all these things, because he wishes to leave the devout and contemplative to imagine for themselves, what were the sublime words which passed between these sages and the august mother, invoked by the Church as Queen of Apostles. It is useless to object, that the Wise Men did not understand the language spoken by the Blessed Virgin ; for they either knew the Hebrew tongue, as many interpreters aver, and then they understood Mary ; if not, they could use interpreters ; or else, there happened to Mary, what we read of the Apostles, whose words were miraculously understood by every kind of hearers.

These princes, after having accomplished their design, prepared to return to Herod, to give him an account of all ; but warned in sleep (many say by an angel), they returned to their country by another road, relating the wonderful things which they had seen,* and becoming the ardent messengers of the birth of a God who had manifested himself to them with such solemnity. The Church, to recall the remembrance

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* St. John Chrysostom (*Hom. VII. in Matt. n.* 1.) says that Providence saved the Wise Men from Herod's fury, in order that, returning home, they might be the heralds of what they had seen. The author of the imperfect work on Matthew, adds that they lived honoring and adoring God, instructing the people, and that after our Redeemer's resurrection they were baptized in those parts by St. Thomas, whose companions they became. Some believe that they suffered martyrdom at Sessenias, a city of Arabia Felix, in the year 70. Father Crumbach, in his History of the Three Kings, maintains that they died bishops and martyrs in their respective cities. Finally Henschenius and Papebroke, Continuators of Bollandus, call Crumbach's reasons ill-founded, as each one may see in the Bollandists.



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of this manifestation, celebrates on the sixth of January, the noble feast, called in Greek, Epiphania or Theophania.*

* The Church celebrates this feast on the sixth of the month of January, uniting it to the two feasts of the baptism of Christ, and the wedding at Cana in Galilee; and hence it is called Epiphania, that is, apparition, a manifestation. Saint Bernard (*Serm. I. Epiph.* Dom.) speaking of these three manifestations of Christ, says that in the first he showed himself truly man, lying in his mother's arms; in the second truly God, by the testimony which the Father then bore him; in the third, he confirmed, by changing water into wine, the power which, as God, he had over all nature. Orosius relates (Lib. VI.) that the three triumphs of Augustus were celebrated on the 6th of January at Rome, and Florentini adds (*Exercit. III., in the History of the Wise Men inserted in his Martyrology*) that perhaps the Church, to contrast the real triumphs of Christ with the vain triumphs of the Gentiles, wished on that day to celebrate these three manifestations. (See Benedict XIV. *de Festis.*) The Greeks call this feast *Theophania;* in English it is called Twelfthday, but on the continent *The day of the Kings.*

Writing from Rome, we cannot pass in silence the feast celebrated in a particular manner at the Church of the Propaganda in honor of the Wise Men. The divine sacrifice is offered according to all the Catholic rites, and in the evening, in the Roman College which adjoins, a public celebration takes place, in which poems in all languages, especially in the oriental tongues, are read. The octave, the feast of the pious society of the Catholic Apostolate, has been for many years solemnized in the vast church of San Andrea della Valle. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered in several languages; sermons are delivered at different hours of the day in various tongues, to commemorate the vocation of the Gentiles, and invite all nations of the earth to praise and adore God in sweet and holy brotherhood.



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CHAPTER VII.

PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—HER GRIEF AT SIMEON'S PROPHECY.

IF there ever was in the world a woman not bound by the Mosaic law of purification, it is certainly the immaculate Mary; a dear and sacred name, in which are combined all virtues in the highest conceivable degree. In the law given to the Israelites, it is said: "And when the days of her purification are expired, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony, a lamb of a year old for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or a turtle for sin; and shall deliver them to the priest, who shall offer them before the Lord, and shall pray for her, and so she shall be cleansed. If she is not able to offer a lamb, she shall take two turtles or two young pigeons, one for a holocaust, and another for sin." *

* Leviticus xii. 6–8. The woman after her delivery remained unclean seven days, during which she communicated her uncleanness to every thing that she

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The holy Fathers and theologians give two reasons for this rite. First, that given by the Levitical law itself, that is, sin. This law reminded woman of the penalty inflicted on Eve for her sin. "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth," a penalty which for forty days kept all mothers in a state of humiliation and penance, far from the temple, into which they were introduced only after they had presented two legal offerings, one in token of gratitude, the other for sin. The second motive is that given in Exodus, where it is ordained that all the first-born of men and beasts should be consecrated to God, either in memory of the departure from Egypt, which was accompanied with the death of all the first-born, or to recall God's sovereign dominion over all creatures. To these reasons of the sacred text theologians add, that mothers bring forth children conceived in sin,* and lose, on becoming fruitful, that perfect maidenhood which is the fairest ornament of their sex.

Now our august Mother was not bound to this ceremony, on any of these grounds. The Blessed Virgin had conceived of the Holy Ghost, and not only had lost nothing of her perfectly intact purity, but, as St. Augustine says, this very conception had consecrated the perfect integrity of her heart. Besides she had brought forth in the wonderful manner which

touched; hence she was separated from all, even her husband. After that time she could live with others and take care of her house, but could not participate in holy things till the fortieth day. If instead of a son she brought forth a daughter, the days of her uncleanliness were doubled, and she had to wait seventy days before partaking of what was holy.

* "I was conceived in iniquity, and in sins did my mother conceive me." (Ps. l. 7.) These words of David have been understood of original sin, designated in the Holy Scriptures under various names, not only by all the interpreters and by the Church, but also by the Jews themselves. Although original sin is one, it is spoken of in the plural, because, although original is one in itself, yet it is the principle and poisoned source of all other sins, which are, so to say, virtually enclosed in it.

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we have stated. On the other hand, sin could in no way exist in him who was, by essence, sanctity itself. Therefore neither the Mother nor the Son was subject to this ceremony ; and again, who but knows that the law, which was a figure of Christ, or co-ordinate to Christ, must expire with the coming of the Prefigured, for whom it had been established.

But although the Blessed Virgin knew by faith that she was Mother of God,—although she knew the sublime degree of perfection to which she had been raised by conceiving of the Holy Ghost,—although she saw clearly that this law was not made for her ; yet, as she had not brought forth secretly, she chose to submit, like other women, to the law of purification, either not to excite the astonishment of those who might learn that she had not fulfilled the law, or on account of her profound humility, which may be in some respects compared to the sun. In fact, as the sun by the splendor of its rays prevents our seeing the brilliancy of the other luminaries, so Mary's humility hid from the eyes of mortals all her other virtues. Thus he, who is truly humble, shows only his abjection.

Moreover, according to the Fathers and doctors, three principal reasons induced the Blessed Virgin to come to the temple on the appointed day. They were, her ardent desire to thank God for the unspeakable benefit of a privileged fruitfulness, so different from that of all other mothers ; her burning desire that her only son should be glorified in the solemn manner which she foresaw ; and finally, her no less ardent desire to labor in the work of Redemption, by offering and redeeming the Emmanuel.

Hence, as soon as the time arrived,* the Blessed Virgin,

* St. Bernard says that the Blessed Virgin submitted to the Purification by the same law which made Our Lord Jesus Christ submit to the Circumcision.

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accompanied by her chaste spouse, carried her divine Son to the temple, thus making, according to some, a journey of about four miles. While the blessed pair were approaching the sacred spot which the Incarnate Word was to fill with his presence, and which was to become, as we have said, even more glorious than Solomon's temple, there also entered into the temple the venerable Simeon, a just, God-fearing man, who lived awaiting the consolation of Israel. The Holy Ghost was in him, and it had been revealed to him that he should not die without seeing Christ the Lord.

The Fathers and Commentators ask whether Simeon *

(*Sermon de purif.*) We know that Hardouin and Berruyer pretend that Christ was presented in the temple at the age of three, but this strange opinion is refuted by the learned, as may be seen in TROMBELLI. (*Mariæ Sanctissimæ vita. III. part* 1. *dissrt. XXII.*)

* Simeon (*who has been heard*) is represented by painters as a priest, but their authority is valueless; Horace's line is well known:

. . . . Pictoribus atque poetis
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.

The opposite opinion is maintained by Photius (*in Quæsi. ad Amphilochium*), Theophylact (*in Lucam*), Euthymius (*Comment in Evang.*), Tillemont, Serry, and others; they say that the blessing given by Simeon to Christ, was not a priestly benediction, but a manifestation of his desire, by foretelling happiness to him, as Elizabeth blessed the Virgin: they add that he might take the child in his arms, without being a priest, the more so as it seems, according to the sacred text, that they met in the porch of the temple, before Jesus was presented to the priest. Others think that Simeon was a priest of the Most High, after the manner of Melchisedech. (See CALMET *in Job.* xlii. 8.)

The learned discuss the point whether this Simeon is the celebrated son of Hillel, called the Babylonian, father of Gamaliel, and prince of the Sanhedrim. The best interpreters deny it; 1st, because the Evangelists always mention the dignity of the persons who bore testimony to Christ; 2d, because Simeon, son of Hillel, could not have then been an old man, as was he of whom St. Luke speaks; 3d, because if this Simeon had been Gamaliel's father, he would have transmitted his piety to his son, and the latter would not have regarded Christ as a seducer; 4th, because the preaching of so illustrious a man could not have remained hidden,

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was a priest, seeing that St. Luke speaks only of the great holiness of this just man, and his heavenly revelations.

Lipomanus remarks, as we shall see,* that Simeon performed several acts which belong to the sacerdotal ministry; that he took, offered, and blessed the divine Infant. Hebrew tradition makes him a priest; and in this is confirmed by several holy Fathers, among others, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem and Saint Epiphanius. The latter says expressly that he was of the tribe of Aaron.

The Virgin then threads the streets of Jerusalem, bearing her dear child in her arms. Oh! how she must have blushed to see herself thus confounded in the eyes of the world with the crowd of Jewish mothers! Scarce had she courage to raise her eyes to heaven, and lowering them on the divine Babe whom she held in her arms, she exclaimed! "Thou beholdest, O my God, how painful it is to me to appear in the eyes of the world to have violated that holy virginity, for which, as thou knowest, I would have refused the sublime

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and would have reached the ears of Herod, who would have punished in some way a man thus become an object of suspicion. It is the pious opinion of Timothy, priest of Jerusalem, that Simeon beheld the Messias and his blessed Mother environed with a splendid halo (*Serm. de proph. Simeonis*). Some have pretended that this holy old man was blind, and then miraculously recovered his sight. But this opinion is refuted by saying; 1st, Had he been blind, he would have needed a guide to reach the temple, while he was conducted by the Holy Ghost. Moreover, we know by Leviticus, that it was forbidden by the blind to exercise the priesthood.

The holy old man did not die on uttering the Canticle, as some pretend, but he did not live to survive the blessed fulfilment of the desire of his heart. Some, on the authority of the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus, believe that Simeon had two sons who rose with Christ, and attested his resurrection to the Jews. This fancy is entirely rejected by the more learned theologians. The body of this saint is preserved at Venice (*Cornari. Eccl. Venet. Antiq. Monum. Dec. IX. et X.*), and many churches have been raised in his honor.

* *Frag.* 42.

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honor of becoming thy mother. But I am thy handmaid, and have no will but thine."

At the sight of this humble woman and her little Child, the aged Simeon, whom an interior voice had just before led into the temple, heard that same voice say to his heart, that that Child was the Desired of the nations, the mighty king, whom Israel awaited as a liberator, unless we prefer to believe, as others relate, that he recognized the Blessed Virgin and the divine Child, by a splendid halo which encircled their heads. Be that as it may, the old man felt new strength, and sighing, asked the mother the favor of taking the little Child a moment in his arms in order to contemplate him.

Mary willingly granted the fervent prayer ; and scarcely had the old man pressed the divine Redeemer to his bosom, and blessed him, when, with streaming eyes, he exclaimed: My fondest wish is granted : for this did I ask to live : "now dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace, because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

At these prophetic and mysterious words of the aged saint, who discovered in that Child the divine and human nature united, and consequently beheld the infinite charity of a God come to ransom sinners, the father and mother were filled with wonder. Simeon's flattering words inspired no vain pride, but they admired the fulfilment of the designs of the divine mercy. Moreover, Mary received in this prophecy a deep wound in her own heart. The aged Saint soon continued the prophecy, of which he had only uttered the joyous and consoling portion.

Thus is a young lamb adorned and crowned with garlands to be led to the slaughter. Scarcely had Simeon, after bless-



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ing the child, restored it to its mother's arms, when he cried: "O mother! behold thy child, sent for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign, which shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

It is easier to imagine than duly express the deep wound which this prophecy made in Mary's tender loving heart. She was troubled, and seized with bitter sorrow, when she thought of the cruel pain that her dear Son was one day to suffer, and which she should herself experience. Hence, as she revealed to Saint Matilda, these words of Simeon changed to bitterness the secret joy she first experienced: not that the Blessed Virgin did not know already, before the prophecy of the venerable seer, all the predictions relative to the life of her divine Son, but because they were then exposed to her in a more special manner, and it was told her, as it were in compendium, how barbarously men would treat Jesus, and how they would estimate his blood and doctrine. If David, even amid the splendors of royalty, was seized with lively grief, when he heard from the lips of the prophet Nathan, that his son by the unfaithful Bersabee should die, what must have been the grief of the Blessed Virgin! Never did Simeon's prophecy leave her mind; as she herself told Saint Bridget, this cruel remembrance returned to her mind as often as she fixed her eyes on her innocent Son.* Whether she pressed him to her lips, or swathed his infant limbs, or fed him with her virginal milk, or bore him in her arms, she ever beheld him pierced and agonizing on the cross. A martyrdom which Richard of St Victor justly calls greater than any martyrdom—a martyrdom to which, according to St Ambrose, she would have succumbed, if she had not been comforted by the

* Book VI. ch. lvii.

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Holy Ghost ; a martyrdom in fine, which Saint Bernard calls more cruel than death ! Yet the august Virgin resigned herself to God's will. Ah ! if we admire, in the Old Law, Abraham, who was about to immolate his son, without any weakness, how much more must we admire the good and tender mother, who submits to the most difficult of all trials, and offers the Almighty the sacrifice of her only Son, a sacrifice, of which Abraham's had only been a shadow and figure.

But not from the lips of the aged Simeon alone did the Blessed Virgin hear the mysteries of her divine Son revealed. At that hour, there was in the temple a widow—Anne, daughter of Phanuel,* of the tribe of Aser. Already advanced in age, she had lived seven years with her husband, who had married her a virgin, that is, at about the age of twelve. She remained a widow to the age of four score and four, departing not from the temple, serving God, night and day, by fastings and prayers. This woman, illumined by light from on high, recognized the Messias in this little child, and began

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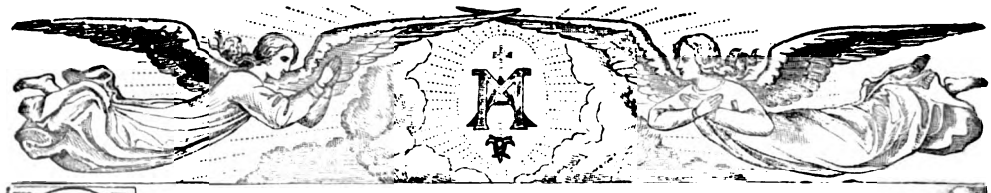
* St. Luke shows clearly who this holy woman was. Some have supposed the eighty-four years mentioned by the Evangelists were the years of her widowhood, and that thus she would be about a hundred years old, which is improbable. St. Augustine (*de Bon. Viduitat.* cvii.) on Anne's long widowhood makes the beautiful reflection, that she had refused to marry again, because she knew that the time had come when women, no longer hoping to bear the Christ, were to serve him with the desire of continence.

Although she was continually in the temple, we cannot doubt but that she was led thither at that moment by a special impulse of the Holy Ghost. It seems, moreover, that she spoke of the Redeemer not only to Mary and Joseph, but also to all who were in the temple, and often to others ; the opinion then being, as we have said, generally spread, that the fulness of time had come.

It is equally probable, that Anne lived some little time after the joy which she experienced at the Messias' birth, and that, after thanking God for so great a mercy, she died in peace. See Muratori (*Dissert. de Sanctorum martyrum natalibus. t. I. Anecdotorum.*) See also the Greek Menology, drawn up by order of the Emperor Basil.



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to speak of him to all those that looked for the redemption of Israel. The Evangelist does not relate what she said, but it is probable that she spoke in terms similar to Simeon's, and that like him, consoled by a special grace, she soon after expired. Thus, as Saint Ambrose says,* persons of every age, sex and condition, bore testimony to the Messias. Simeon prophesied ; a virgin and a spouse had prophesied ; a widow was also to prophesy, and that widow was Anne, who, by the sanctity of her life, by her alienation from earthly things, by continual prayer, and by all the other works of piety, had been prepared to receive the divine light, and judged worthy to announce to others the desired Redeemer of men.

The Evangelist does not say, whether Simeon and Anne joined in accomplishing the ceremony ; some authors think so, and not without good reason.† For our part, we merely say, that arriving at the foot of the altar of the holocausts,‡ Mary

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* Lib. II. *in Luc.*

† Did Simeon and Anne address the Blessed Virgin before or after the accomplishment of the rite? The question is mooted. Yet, according to the words of the Evangelist, it seems more probable that they met before the ceremony, and that thus these holy spouses joined with those who had come to the temple for the same purpose. This too explains how such great prophecies remained known in the temple only, and were not spread among the people, as most believe.

‡ Although in Book I. ch. x., we spoke briefly of the temple and its form, we believe that we shall please our readers by adding what follows, to elucidate the ceremony fulfilled by the Blessed Virgin. The chief and most sacred part of the temple was situated towards the western part, and was called the Holy of Holies, where the high priest alone entered but once a year on the feast of the Expiation. Opposite the Holy of Holies, was another part of the temple, in which stood the altar of incense, and into which the priests entered to burn the aromatics; next came the court, called the *porch of the priests*, because they alone could enter it. There stood the altar of the holocausts, on which the divine child was placed by the priests.

After this court came another and larger one, separated from it by a wall three feet high; this all the Jews entered, and from it they could see all the sacrifices offered in the other. At the end of the temple was the last court, where the



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and Joseph took Jesus respectfully in their hands, and to obey the law of Moses, laid him on the altar, and offered him to the Eternal, accompanying the oblation with a pair of turtle doves or pigeons.* After fulfilling the first law, they ransomed their son for five sicles, which were placed in the hands of the priest, as laid down in Exodus; and then the Queen of Angels did like other women,† who came to the temple to be cleansed.‡

Gentiles could enter and adore the God of the Jews. Here too was a marble table engraved with the law threatening death to whoso ventured to pass its precincts.

* St. Bernard (*Serm.* lix. *in Cant.*) gives the following reasons to prove that the Blessed Virgin offered but the doves: "for the dove, says he, is the symbol not only of plaintive mourning, but also of chastity, and was consequently the gift to be offered for a virginal childbirth." It is said that the lamb was not offered, either because it was a figure of the Divine Lamb, who was then in reality offered, or because the holy spouses wishing to attest to the world the poverty in which Jesus Christ chose to be born, offered only the victim usual to the poor.

† We regard as apocryphal the account of Origen (*Matth. Comm.*), and of St. Gregory of Nyssa (*in Christ. Nativ.*), that the Blessed Virgin after accomplishing the rite of Purification, took her place among the virgins, and not among the married women, to manifest her virginity; and that Zachary wishing to defend her, was killed by the people between the temple and the altar, as a violator of the law. In fact, this distinction of place in the temple for married women and virgins, is not sufficiently proved; and St. Jerome, a grave and exact writer, regards the story as fabulous, as do the more learned writers of our times.

We here remark, incidentally, that the Holy Church, without reviving legal uncleanness after childbirth, instituted a blessing which Christian mothers receive when they come to thank God for their happy delivery.

‡ The Church celebrates the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin on the second of February. The Greeks call it *Hypante* or *Hypapante*, that is, the *Meeting*, to recall the meeting of Simeon with Mary and Joseph, when they brought Jesus to the temple. It is called the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, although the festival commemorates also the oblation of the Son. To solemnize the day, there is a procession with lighted candles, whence the English name Candlemas.

Yvo of Chartres, a writer of the eleventh century (*Serm. de Purificat Sanct. Mariæ*) says, that as Simeon received into his arms the infirmity, that is the humanity, but knew the interior majesty which illumined the darkness of our infidelity, so on that day, every one of the faithful bears in his hands a lighted candle; for the wax betokens our frailty, and light, the illumination of our minds. He adds,

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After the ceremony, the holy spouses secretly left Jerusalem, which, according to many sacred writers, did not know that the Divine Messias had come, because the moment mentioned in the eternal decrees for the manifestation of the Christ, had not arrived. Thus meditating and treasuring up in their hearts what they had heard, they returned together to Galilee, to their city Nazareth, bearing their divine Babe.

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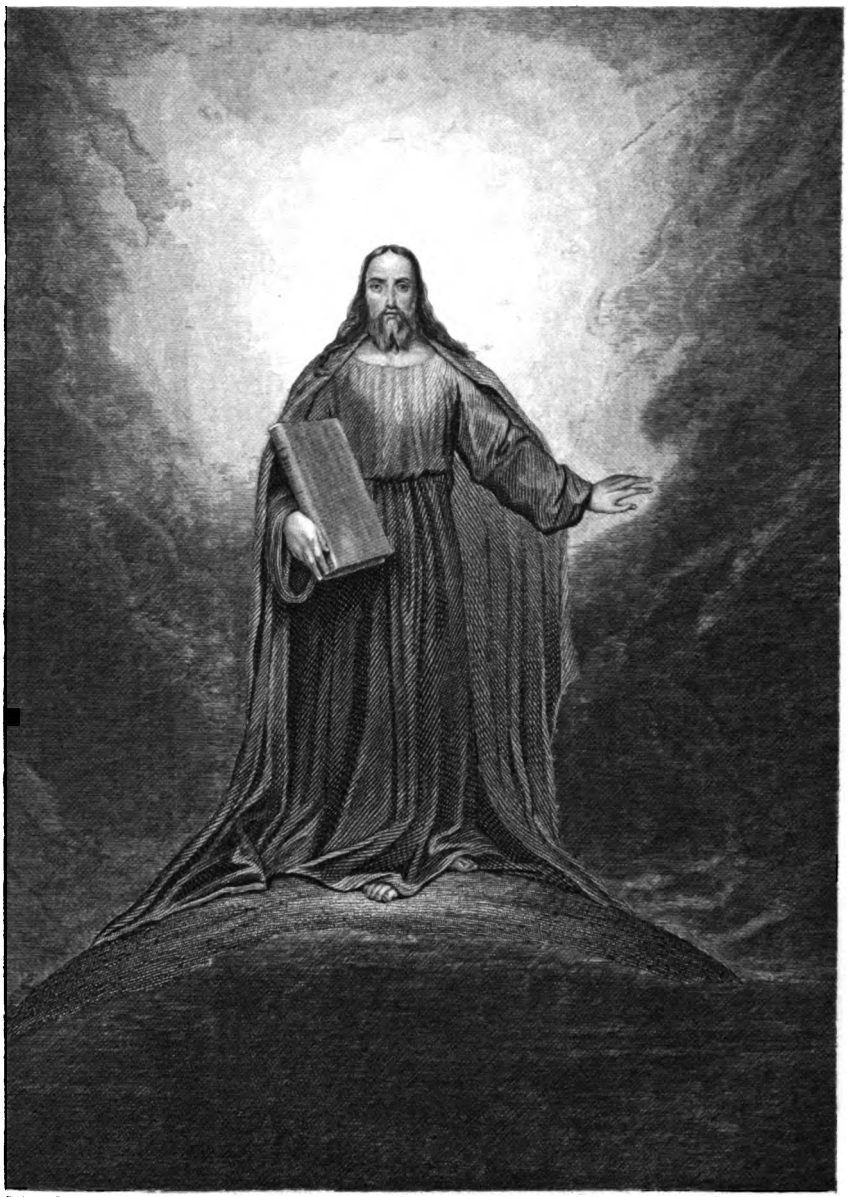
moreover, that wax made by bees, is the symbol of that divine fruit, which impaired the mother's integrity, neither in conception, nor in birth.

Those to whom Christian ceremonies consecrated to the true God are reminiscences of pagan rites, believe that the ancient Romans carried tapers in procession in honor of a goddess who was purified on that day. Others say, that each one bore a torch through the city in honor of Ceres, in imitation of that goddess seeking her daughter Proserpine all night long by torchlight, in Mount Etna. Baronius believes (*See Martyrology*) that Gelasius I., Sovereign Pontiff towards the close of the 8th century, abolished the infamous games of the Lupercalia, which the pagans celebrated in the month of February, and that he instituted the feast of the Purification. This feast passed from the West to the East, to appease the divine wrath, when in the time of the Emperor Justinian, a great epidemic was depeopling Constantinople. The Pontiff Serguis, in the seventh century, requires the procession to be made with lighted candles. We prefer the opinion of Benedict XIV. (*De Festis*), who believes that this feast, much more ancient, replaced the Ambarvalia, a sacrifice which the Romans offered in this month to the infernal gods, in memory of the conquest of the world. They went around the city with torches in their hands, after paying the tax or census exacted every five years.



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Painted by Johnston. Engraved by [illegible]

JESUS CHRIST.

Going, therefore teach ye all nations

St MATTHEW. CHAP 28 VER 19

Edward Dunigan & Brother, New York.

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CHAPTER VIII.

MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS, AND FLIGHT OF THE HOLY FAMILY TO EGYPT.

WHAT cannot ambition effect in the human heart! To what crimes does it not at times impel! Why need we ask history for other examples, when we have a striking example in that Herod, who, as we shall see, stifled in his heart every sentiment of nature, to maintain himself on the throne, and protect his power? We have seen his terror at the unexpected tidings that the Wise Men brought him, and seen how that crafty hypocrite employed every means to deceive these sages, come from afar to adore a God whom they knew not, and who was withal so near them.

The jealous monarch, having waited in vain several days, and even weeks, began to suspect the faith of these illustrious strangers, and after long meditating what course to pursue, he adopted the most savage; he resolved to put to death all

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children* born in Bethlehem and its neighborhood. The impious order was published, as the Evangelist remarks, in order to fulfil what had been foretold by the prophet of Lament, when he cried: "A voice was heard on high,† of lamentation, of mourning, and weeping; of Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted for them, because they are not." The brutal monarch to protect himself, and envelop in the common ruin the divine Child, fixed by his fancy the age of his victims; and resolved to cut off, not only all little babes of the age of Jesus, but also all children of two years and under; for, according to the most esteemed interpreters, he had not asked the wise men, when they had begun to see the star, or whether they set out immediately on seeing it. The sanguinary order was executed by the most

* Some have imagined that Herod delayed for a long time the promulgation of the edict for the massacre of the Innocents; they assign as a reason that that prince, having received no answer from the Wise Men, wished to make further inquiry, but that important affairs of his kingdom at first prevented him; that after that he had to go to Rome to defend his conduct before Augustus. We believe, on the authority of the best historians, that he published the edict a few months after the Redeemer's birth: 1st, because it is not probable that a suspicious prince would have waited two years, when, as we have shown in Chap. VI., the arrival of the Wise Men took place a few days after the birth of Jesus; 2d, because in the last years of his life, as Flavius Josephus relates, Herod did not leave his kingdom, and when he had to consult Augustus, sent ambassadors; 3d, because, according to Calmet, who relies on solid documents, Herod died a few months or days after the massacre of the Innocents; now it is certain that he did not witness the Pasch of that year. He ordered all the children of two years and under to be put to death for the reasons we have given.

† St. Matthew ii. 8, does not cite the exact words of Jeremias xxxi. 15, which are, "A voice of lamentation was heard on high;" but says, "A voice was heard in Rama." The sense is the same, Rama meaning height. This little town was in the tribe of Benjamin, on the borders of Judea. Rachel, well beloved mother of her children, having been buried at Bethlehem, was appositely introduced by the prophet weeping over the premature death of these innocent victims of Herod's fury.

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barbarous men, and the blood of a countless crowd of little innocents, torn from their loving and heart-broken mothers, deluged the streets of Bethlehem and the country round about.

Such was the multitude of victims,* that the cries of anguish were heard to the mountain tops, as St. Jerome tells us. We credit neither those who would attenuate the number of these "blossoms of the martyrs,"† as the Church calls

* Serry and Ansaldi believe that the number of victims was limited; they rely on the small population of the little town of Bethlehem, on the ancient ecclesiastical books, which do not speak of the number of these martyrs, and on the silence of the historian Josephus. Some fix it at one, others at two thousand. Bartholomew of Trent, in his Life of the Holy Innocents, and the Blessed James de Voragine, without determining the number say that it was very large; for they think that the massacre included children from two years to one night old, or, according to St. John Chrysostom, from two to five years. Salmeron in his commentary, relying on the Greek menologies, and calendars, computes them at fourteen thousand, the number stated in the mass of the Ethiopic rite. In the sacred congregation for the correction of oriental books, on the 14th of April, 1733, the question was raised whether this number should be left or not, and it was determined to make no alteration. This opinion is moreover received by Assemani, (*Tom. V. Kal. Eccl. Unio.*) by Graveson (*De Myst. et Ann. Christi dissert. VIII.*) and by others. Some, with Natalis, (*Catal. Sanct.*) carry it as high as one hundred and forty-four thousand, according to the response of the first nocturn in the office of the festival, in which we read: "One hundred and forty four thousand who were purchased from the earth: these are they who were not defiled with women, &c." (Apoc. xiv. 3–4). Others, taking the word Rama literally, believe that the massacre took place in the tribe of Benjamin, or at least in the city of Rama.

† Holy Church regards these little children as martyrs, because they had the glory of dying for Christ. "Yes," cries St. Peter Chrysologus, "they are truly martyrs of grace, they confess by silence, they combat unconsciously, and unconsciously triumph and are crowned." Prudentius chants poetically:

"Lovely flower of martyrs, hail!
Smitten by the tyrant foe
On life's threshold—as the gale
Strews the roses ere they blow.
First to die for Christ, sweet lambs!
At the very altar ye,
With your fatal crowns and palms,
Sport in your simplicity."

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them, with Prudentius, nor those who raise the number to one hundred and fifty thousand.

We adopt the opinion of those who estimate the number of the Holy Innocents at about fourteen thousand. We also believe, that it is not sufficiently proved, that among the children thus put to death, was Herod's own son,* and that St. John the Baptist was on the point of perishing in this great massacre; because the law was only made for Bethlehem and the country around, and that thus the massacre did not extend to the mountains of Judea, where Zachary's son was born.

When Pharaoh ordered the children to be drowned in the Nile, God saved him whom the king of Egypt sought, that is Moses; so from the horrible carnage ordered by Herod,

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If we are asked why they are crowned, we shall answer with St. Bernard: "Ask Herod why he killed them; and as the wickedness of that impious king killed them instead of Christ, the infinite goodness of the Redeemer would grant them a well deserved crown, for they died in his stead." Justly then, and conformably to the divine will, have the Holy Fathers wished the Church to honor perpetually the memory of the Holy Innocents. The Latin Church commemorates them as real martyrs on the 28th, and the Greek Church on the 29th of December. About the close of the fourth century, the Emperor Justinian the younger, it is said, raised at Constantinople, in honor of these martyrs, a church where their relics are venerated. The Basilica of Ostia now possesses some.

* Macrobius relates that the Emperor Augustus having heard, that among the children put to death by Herod, was a son of that cruel prince, said: "It is better to be Herod's hog than his son," alluding to the Mosaic law which forbids the Jews to eat pork. It is this anecdote, which, in the thirteenth century, gave rise to the opinion that Herod's son had perished among the innocent victims; and the poets have repeated it, doubtless to inspire greater horror for the barbarity of that prince. We will remark that the testimony of Macrobius, which is a confirmation of the massacre of the Innocents, ordered by Herod, must be understood in this passage, according to the Blessed James de Voragine, whom Baronius follows, in the sense that the king put to death not one of his children still in the cradle, but that he put to death in prison his son Antipater, who had attempted to dethrone him, a fact which took place about the same time as the massacre at Bethlehem.

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was He saved, whom the impious prince sought to destroy: for the time had not come, when for our salvation the Son of man was to die; and as long as the hour marked by the Almighty had not struck, all human power was vain. Herod doubtless supposed that he confirmed his throne by this slaughter, while, in fact, the horrible crime abridged his wretched life, so that a few months after he died in the most horrible convulsions, devoured by worms.

The Blessed Virgin having accomplished the ceremony in the temple, and satisfied the law, as we have said, nothing now detained the holy spouses at Jerusalem. The Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke do not relate, in the same way, the history of the childhood of Jesus; which has given rise to various opinions among interpreters. St. Augustine,* followed by Bede and others, thinks that the Blessed Virgin was warned in Jerusalem itself to fly into Egypt.

Others believe with St. Bonaventure,† that the holy spouses returned to Nazareth; that profiting by that occasion, they visited St. Elizabeth, to give St. John the joy of contemplating the Messias; and that before arriving in their city, they were warned by the angel to fly into Egypt. St. Anselm, Avila, St. John Chrysostom,‡ with others, believe that they went directly from Jerusalem to Nazareth. We willingly adopt this latter opinion, because it is supported by the gravest writers; and because St. Luke, though silent as to Herod's decree, says clearly that when they had fulfilled all according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their city, Nazareth.§

While dwelling then in that obscure town, they probably learned Herod's bloody edict; but conscious how dear to

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* *Concord. Evangel.*

‡ *Theoph.* MATT. ii.—Hom. ix. in Matt.

† Life of Christ, p. 63.

§ Luke ii. 39.



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heaven was the divine pledge which they lovingly guarded, and assured that God would make known his will, they did not lose courage, but lived full of a perfect confidence in his infinite providence. This confidence was not misplaced, for the angel of the Lord, Gabriel (as many Fathers believe), appeared in a dream to Joseph, bid him take the child with its mother, fly into Egypt to escape from Herod's persecution, and remain there till ordered to return. On awaking, Joseph related this providential dream to Mary, and both, obedient to the will of God, set out that same night, as most Fathers and doctors believe.

We may inquire, perhaps, why God chose flight, the least noble means, to withdraw his Son from Herod's fury, and why he sent him to Egypt, when Herod's decree condemned to death only the children of Bethlehem and the country around it. Doubtless the Almighty had numberless means of baffling, as he did baffle, the impious and mad persecution of the Idumean monarch ; but Christ, come into the world to repress human pride, taught us here to overcome its swellings by opposing to it as he did in all his actions, unequalled patience and humility.

And again, he took flight, to teach us by his example, that in time of persecution it is better to fly than fall.*

He went to Egypt, and not to some other country, because, as St. Matthew tells us, the prophecy was to be fulfilled which the Almighty had uttered by the lips of the prophet Osee : "Out of Egypt I have called my Son ;"† because Egypt was near Judea, and not subject to Herod ; because, as the Abbot Rupert remarks,‡ this son, who was to become like his brethren, except in sin, would fly to and dwell in that Egypt where for more than two centuries, had dwelt

* St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon* cliii. † Osee xi. 1. ‡ *In Matth.*

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with all their people Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose descendant he was according to the flesh. To these motives we add, with St. Leo the great,* that of the glory which was to redound to God. Egypt, as all know, was the cradle of idolatry and superstition. Our Redeemer by his presence bore to it a grace, secret indeed, but still most potent, to destroy an infamous worship, and one day people those deserts with countless hermits and monks, who would there adore and serve the true God in spirit and truth. This makes St. John Chrysostom † say that the firmament, when it is adorned with the most brilliant stars, seems less beautiful, and less resplendent than Egypt did in the eyes of angels when peopled with its armies of solitaries who, by the sanctity of their lives, resembled not men, but the very angels.

The Evangelist does not tell us how the holy family made this journey, nor the precise spot in Egypt where they stopped. Yet we shall endeavor to say something about it. As to the method of the journey, there can be no doubt, they did it in the poorest manner. They had neither servants nor proud steeds. Joseph went on foot, a knotty staff in his hand; the Blessed Virgin, with the divine Child in her arms, being seated on an ass.

Could the poorest have less? And yet what greater, holier, nobler pair ever travelled on this earth? The angels watched over them: to atone for the neglect of men, these heavenly spirits showed themselves to the blessed travellers, and assisted them in their wants. Even insensible things felt their presence, and, as best they could, gave signs of joy at the passage of these sublime visitors. Here statues of the false gods fell to earth, there oracles were struck dumb, and temples trembled to their base. The wild beasts were tamed,

* *Serm. II. de Epiph.* † *Hom. VII. in Matth.*



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and all creatures served their Creator on that journey, as it was revealed to St. Bridget.

As to the place where these august fugitives finally rested, some pretend that they went to Cairo; others to Hermopolis, where, according to Sozomen,* a large tree to cover them with its shade bowed to earth its haughty branches.† Others say that they reached Alexandria, a very large city, where, in consequence of the number of the Jews, a very flourishing synagogue existed, and where Joseph could more easily find employment. Others again think that striking further into Egypt they proceeded to Heliopolis, the more so as the Jews had near that city a temple built by the priest Ozias with the permission of the King of Egypt.‡

Among these opinions each may choose as he will; all seem probable. As to the duration of the exile of the holy family, we shall say that on this point too writers differ. The illustrious father of ecclesiastical history thinks that our Divine Redeemer spent no less than nine years in Egypt. Ammonius says that he remained only seven, others say five

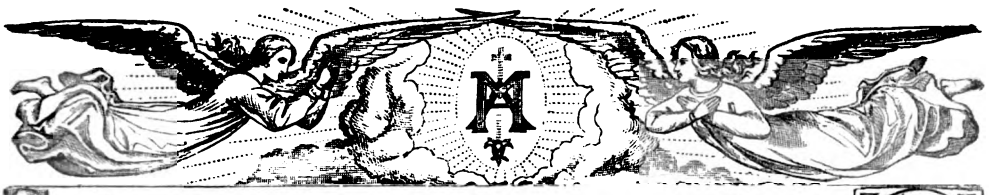
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* *Lib. V. Hist. Eccl.*

† Sozomen (*Hist. Eccl. lib.* 1. *ch. XX.*) and Baronius write, that near the walls of Hermopolis, a large peach tree bowed down in adoration, and that when its branches touched the earth, the devil took flight, and never more frequented the place where he had been previously adored. They add, that the fruit, leaves, and bark of this tree, had afterwards the power of healing diseases. It is related, that 365 idols fell in a vast temple in that city, but rose as soon as the holy family departed. It is related by Natalis and Marangoni, that Saint Dismas was an Egyptian; that he met the holy family in a forest, and, struck with the beauty of the divine child, and the gentleness of the mother, had not power to assault them, but seized with admiration, exclaimed: "Were it possible for a God to come into the world, I would say that this child was a God;" that he gave them hospitality, and that, thanks to the Blessed Virgin, he obtained of the divine child, the cure of his son. These facts, and many others related by pious writers, we leave to the criticism of our pious readers.

‡ Josephus, Book VII.—St. Jerome, Hom. XI.

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and even less; St. Epiphanius * and Nicephorus two. This last opinion seems to us the most probable. Herod died soon after the massacre of the Holy Innocents, and Archelaus succeeded him on the throne of Judea. Now by the very words of St. Matthew, "But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord," &c., we learn that Joseph was made aware of Herod's death, and that he was ignorant who was the successor of that prince; and surely he would not have been ignorant of these things, had the holy family resided for many years in a country so near to Judea.

What striking examples of virtue did not the Blessed Virgin then give that people! All those who had the happiness of knowing the Mother of God must have admired and praised her, sought her society, and derived from it great advantage for their souls.

Cornelius a Lapide † says that many Egyptians, touched by the sanctity and life of these blessed spouses, adored and loved the true God. This apostleship of Mary would be still greater, if we follow the opinion of Novato,‡ for he pretends that the holy family resided in the most thickly settled parts of Egypt and went from city to city to scatter the seeds of faith, since spread over the whole world.

If Mary on first hearing our Saviour call her by the sweet name of Mary,—on seeing him take his first unsteady steps,—on showing to the Gentiles that desired of the everlasting hills, the Redeemer of men, experienced the liveliest joy, she must have experienced at the same time great grief to see God's majesty offended in that land of superstition, where she was forced to remove from place to place with her divine Child to shield it from the fury of Herod, that barbarous king

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* Hæres. 78. † Lib. I. ‡ *Comment. in Matth. II.* Vol. I. ch. xv.



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whom a mother's heart ever beheld in pursuit of her well beloved son.

Mary and Joseph lived by the work of their hands, and we are inclined to believe that these blessed spouses were soon reduced to great poverty, because Joseph, unknown in that country, found little work, and because, in his charity, he had kept for himself and his holy family little of the gold which he had received from the wise men. Some have said that the destitution of the Holy Family was at times so great, that the Blessed Virgin was compelled to beg from door to door! Ludolph of Saxony* adds that the divine Child one day asked his mother for bread to appease his hunger, and that the poor mother had none to give him.†

Although the holy spouses were completely resigned to God's will, yet we may believe that they sighed to return to their native land, and that the humble city of Nazareth had greater attractions for them than the haughty pyramids and the palm trees of Egypt, for a native land is dear, is beautiful, is sacred to every noble heart. And behold, when they least expected it, the heavenly messenger again appeared. Joseph was by chance asleep; the Blessed Virgin was seated near him, contemplating with a sweet look her dear little child who united in himself human beauty and divine beauty. The angel gladdens the sleep of the just man: "Arise," said he, "and take the child and his mother, and go into the land

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* *Vita Christi.*

† The life led by the holy spouses in Egypt, was, according to the account of almost all the Fathers, a wandering life, such as would be natural for fugitives. Some think that the gold offered by the Wise Men, had been providentially kept, and served them in their necessities; others believe, that, by the labor of their hands, they supplied the wants of life; and some, as we have stated, say that Mary solicited alms. We prefer the second opinion, yet do not venture to condemn the others.

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of Israel: for they are dead that sought the life of the child." Joseph awoke and informed his spouse of the heavenly vision; both returned thanks to the Almighty, and with the same celerity that they had set out from Nazareth, they prepared to return to their dear country. Ludolph * and Saint Bonaventure say, that on their way they again passed through the mountains of Judea to see John the Baptist once more; † this is probable, for they had to pass near by. Having crossed the Jordan they entered the land of Israel. Joseph, eager to learn the condition of his country, found that Archelaus, a son of Herod, reigned over Judea; and fearing lest that prince should have inherited his father's cruelty with his throne, avoided entering that kingdom. Silveira ‡ remarks that when the angel appeared to Joseph, and bade him go to the land of Israel, he meant not Judea, but Galilee, while Joseph understood that he was to go to Judea, that is to Jerusalem, where stood the temple of the Lord, because he supposed that place most worthy to be the abode of Christ. Hence the angel, seeing that Joseph's error did not arise from imprudence, but from his admirable piety, again appeared to him, not to give a different order, but to show the precise spot. Then Joseph, without going up to Jerusalem or even entering Judea, passed into the tribes of Issachar and Dan, and proceeding to Galilee, saw once more his native land, which, forming part of that province, belonged to the tetrarchate of

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* *Vita Christi.* c. xiii.

† This opinion, that the holy family, as they returned from Egypt, visited Saint Elizabeth, may have given ground to the painters to represent Saint John the Baptist, and the Divine Redeemer caressing each other. If we adhere to the sole testimony of the Evangelists, the first time that John saw our Saviour, was, when he was baptizing in the Jordan, having recognized him, say the Fathers, only by a supernatural light.

‡ Vol. I. Book II. ch. ix.

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Antipater* and not to the kingdom of his brother Herod Archelaus.†

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* Herod left three sons: Archelaus, Antipater, and Philip, who all, eager to reign after their father's death, applied to Cæsar to obtain the crown. Archelaus asked it as eldest son of Herod; Antipater, as his heir appointed by will; and Philip, because his brothers disagreed. Cæsar, to satisfy them all, divided the kingdom into three parts; he gave Herod Antipater Galilee, and Judea to Archelaus.

† The Church, in the *Martyrology*, commemorates the return of the Holy Family on the seventh of January.





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CHAPTER IX

MARY AND JOSEPH LOSE JESUS AND FIND HIM AGAIN.

MARY, our august queen and mother's life was a perpetual holocaust of the most signal virtues, especially of obedience and patience. We have already seen and shall more clearly see, in the course of this history, ever new and ever striking examples of these two virtues. After the long and painful exile in which her modesty, habituated to a solitary and retired life, had suffered so much, Mary again beheld her humble home in Nazareth, and resumed her former life. The inhabitants of the little town doubtless saw with joy the return of this dear and exemplary family, whose piety never had nor will have its equal on earth. The Blessed Virgin remained continually in prayer, as she herself revealed to

Saint Bridget ;* she rarely wished to see or be seen, and scarcely ever went out except for works of religion or charity to her neighbor. She divided her time between vigils, prayer, meditation, manual labor, the wants of her house, and those of others. She found unspeakable happiness in being with her only son, annihilating herself before the hidden majesty of that divine Child. Nor did the laborious Joseph experience less consolation ; often taking on his knees the beautiful infant Jesus, he bestowed on him the fondest caresses, while angels stood in admiration and the just man himself shed tears of love.

In fine, as St. Luke says, the child increased in age and strength, was filled with wisdom, and God's grace was with him. These words should be taken in the sense that Jesus Christ, who had, from his mother's womb, possessed these gifts in a supernatural manner, then began to feel, like other children, the progress of age, and that that wisdom with which he was filled, was manifested by degrees : and when the Evangelist says that God's grace was with him, he merely means to show that Jesus was the only object of the Father's love, for whose glory he had so greatly humbled himself.

The Jews, as every one knows, had many and numerous feasts, divided into continued and annual feasts. The former were the Sabbath and the new moon. Among the annual feasts were the Pasch, celebrated with the feast of the Azymes or unleavened bread for seven days after the fourteenth of the moon *Nisan*, that is to say, the month of March ; Pentecost, called also the feast of weeks, because it took place seven weeks after the Pasch ; the feast of Trumpets on the first day of the September moon, so called, because the trumpets sounded in memory of Isaac, miraculously saved from Abraham's sword. On the tenth day of the same moon occurred

* *Revel. Book VI. ch. 59.*



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the feast of the Propitiation, because in that day Moses reconciled to God the people after their abominable adoration of the golden calf. The feast of the Tabernacles took place on the fifteenth day of the same month, and that of the *Encaenia* * was celebrated towards the close of November. Besides these general feasts there were particular ones, instituted to thank God for the signal graces which he had lavished on the Jewish nation.† Among the most solemn feasts were the Pasch, instituted in memory of the departure from Egypt; Pentecost, in memory of the law given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the feast of Tabernacles, in which the Jews for eight days dwelt in the fields, thus recalling the tents which had of old sheltered their fathers in the desert. Every Jew had to go to Jerusalem thrice a year to attend the celebration of these solemnities; and although the law of Moses obliged only men, yet women went also. If any one could not go up for the feast of Pentecost or Tabernacles, he never failed to go for the Pasch, the principal and most solemn act of the Jewish religion.

We cannot say with certainty whether the holy pair went three times a year to the temple of Jerusalem; but their sublime piety would lead us to think so, did not esteemed authors call it in doubt. Yet it is certain, since the Evangelist says it expressly, that they attended on the feast of the Pasch. It is very true that they dreaded Archelaüs; but they might, as Saint Augustine remarks, ‡ conceal themselves

* Book I. ch. vi.

† These particular feasts were those of Judith's victory over Holophernes, and Judas Macchabee over Nicanor; of Mardochai, and all the Jewish people saved from the wiles of haughty and impious Aman; of Simon Macchabee, who drove from the citadel of Jerusalem, the enemies of his country; and finally, that of the invention of the sacred fire, after the Babylonian captivity.

‡ *Lib. II. De Consens. Evang.*

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amid the great multitude of every tribe, and leave the city immediately after fulfilling the law. They went to Jerusalem, says Saint Eucherius, * to hear the law, to partake of the sacrifices, to witness the solemnity, and serve, under the veil of that feast, the truth which they already possessed. The innocent lambs that were immolated, the bloody sacrifices that were offered to God, figured the Christ; and the Blessed Virgin heard with unspeakable love the prophecies chanted which referred to herself, prophecies which she saw already fully accomplished. As soon as his age permitted it, the Blessed spouses took the Infant Jesus with them, as many think,† so as not to deprive themselves of that dear and precious treasure, which they kept with so much care and so much love, and because they had learned from their parents to accustom their children early to acts of religion.

Be that as it may, it is certain that our divine Redeemer, in the twelfth year of his age, went, with his mortal parents, to the city of Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch. After the seven days of the Azymes, Mary and Joseph were returning for Nazareth, when they perceived that the holy child was

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* Luke ii.

† The law of Deuteronomy (xvi. 16.) obliged all males to appear thrice a year in the presence of the Lord, in the spot chosen by him, in the solemnities of which we have spoken. The doctors believe that little children were bound by the law when they arrived at the age of reason, that is, about the seventh year. Others, and among them Hugo Grotius, think that this law could not be understood literally, and that little children were not to be rashly exposed to the hardships of a journey, which might be long and painful, according to their respective distance from Jerusalem; these think that the rigorous obligation began only about the age of twelve. Hence we cannot decide whether Jesus was lost the first time that he was taken to Jerusalem, because, on the one hand, according to the same Grotius, the pious did not generally wait till their children attained their twelfth year; and on the other hand, Saint Luke mentions only the visit of this infant Saviour, although he states that his father and mother went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Pasch.

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not with them. It is not easy to explain how this happened. To accuse them of want of care would be at once unjust and impious, for more careful, loving parents could not be found. Some have said that, in these solemnities, the Jews of the same country went together; that to avoid all confusion the men went apart from the women; that the children were free to follow either; and that consequently Mary might suppose the holy Child with Joseph, and Joseph believe him to be with his mother. But Baronius, contradicting Bede, maintains that in all cases this separation took place only on their return. Origen says that Jesus disappeared from the eyes of those with whom his mother had left him. Euthymius, Maldonado, and the angelical Doctor, think that he became invisible to his parents, when they left Jerusalem. Baronius, and others say, that while the Blessed Virgin was on the way back with Joseph and the divine Child, it happened by the will of God, that an accident compelled them to halt for a time, and that they allowed the child to go on under the care of his relatives; but that after being detained longer than they had expected, they both followed a little cross path in hope of sooner joining him. As for our part, not venturing to choose among these various opinions, we shall only say that it was not wholly fortuitous, and that, as St. Luke says, Mary and Joseph, not finding him, returned to Jerusalem in search of him. It is certain that they missed the divine Child the first day, and immediately began their laborious search. It is generally believed that this happened in the evening, when all the travellers, or at least those in their company, met in the appointed hostelry to pass the night, and this is probable.

Who will give thoughts to my mind, sentiments to my heart, power to my words to express the unspeakable grief of these holy spouses during the few days that were long ages for them? Who will tell their tears, their sighs, their wail-

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ing? One whole day they walked to and fro, full of anxiety, taking no rest, braving every obstacle, searching the most desert spots, the roughest paths, questioning all whom they met. Juda's grief when he no longer found in the well the brother, whose life he thought he had saved, cannot be compared to Joseph's. The spouse in the sacred canticles, who, hurried and lonely, ran in the shades of night, asking all nature for him whom her soul loved, is only a feeble picture of Mary seeking her beloved son. "O my love, O my only good!" she cried, "return to me, show me the spot where it pleases thee to hide! if the chant of the angels revealed thee to the shepherds, if a brilliant star led the wise men to thy cradle, if the fallen idols proclaimed thy coming to the Egyptians, show thyself to me, who am thy tender mother; dissipate my sorrow, more bitter than the sorrow foretold by Simeon." Night came, nor had they yet found the holy Child; in vain had they asked their relatives and friends; they never closed their eyes that night, and when day came, they resumed their way back to Jerusalem.

They searched in the streets, in the public places; they returned to the courts of the temple filled with crowds of the faithful. They cast their troubled glance over that immense multitude, and beheld the divine Child, who, seated, listened and questioned the doctors,* amazed and enraptured at his wisdom and answers.

* It is generally believed that our Lord was found discussing with the doctors in the temple. The Evangelist only says that he was sitting among the doctors, hearing them and putting questions. He was probably asking an explanation of the prophecies as to the coming of the Messias, and thus began to show them that the time foretold had already come. There was nothing strange in a child being among the doctors, if we remember that the Rabbins, to explain the Holy Scriptures, had a kind of school in the vestibule of the temple, near the eastern gate. The aged and more venerable, as Saint Ambrose (*in Epist.* 1. *ad Corinth.*) and Baronius (*Ann. XII.*) teach, sat at desks, the more worthy after them on benches,

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Three motives enable the theologians and sacred commentators to measure the boundless grief of the holy spouses, and especially of Mary, namely: the privation of an infinite good sovereignly loved by her; the idea of the pain which the Child * might suffer far from his mother, and finally the unjust reproaches of her relatives and friends, that she had neglected the holy and most amiable Child, who was the wonder and joy of all who beheld him.

As soon as Jesus saw his holy mother, he doubtless consoled her with a sweet look, thus rewarding her for the agony she had suffered during those three days.†

But when the august Mother of God was relieved, by

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and the last on the pavement; all were permitted to question the doctors on the matters explained by them. Some have pretended that the Blessed Virgin found her divine Son at the moment when he was explaining these words of Isaias: "*Behold a Virgin shall bear a son,*" and that she felt a holy consolation to see her son reveal to the synagogue that mystery which she knew had already been accomplished in herself. For our part it is enough to state how he was found.

The sacred interpreters and commentators, examining our Saviour's motives, for giving at so tender an age this solemn proof of wisdom, reply with Maldonado (*Comment. in Ev.*) and others, that he did so, because if he had suddenly begun to teach at the age of thirty, without previously displaying any wisdom, men would have admired without following him. "It was proper, then," say they, "that the Divine Redeemer should do so, and just at an age when children begin to give unequivocal signs of intelligence."

* Cornelius a Lapide (*Comm. in Luc. II.*) thinks that our Redeemer spent these three days, partly in prayer in the temple, and partly in discussing with the doctors, who were so amazed at him, that as Lyranus and Avila think, they gave him his meals. Saint Bernard (*Serm. in Dom. octav. Epiph.*) and Saint Thomas (2. 2. *q.* 187. *art.* 5.) believe that he maintained himself by soliciting alms.

† They missed the child towards the close of the first day, and found him on the third. Some say the fourth, taking strictly the Evangelist's words: "And it came to pass that after three days they found him." (Luke ii. 46.) But as the paraphrasts explain it; these words "after three days," mean the third day. Some read "And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised" (Luke ii. 20), that is to say the eighth day; and "The son of man must after three days rise again" (Mark viii. 31), that is to say the third day.

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finding her dear son, and had adored in him the will of the Almighty, still breathless, she said: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." In these words we love to remark, in the first place, Mary's humility; she does not name herself first, she who was the true mother of Jesus, but names Joseph, who was only his adoptive father; she thus concealed from the eyes of the world her sublime dignity, and taught all women to honor their husbands. This humble language was not reproved by Jesus with bitterness, as heretics have pretended; but the divine Child answered by a loving reproach to the innocent manifestation of grief which his parents had experienced far from their beloved son. Sweet and instructive was our Redeemer's answer: "Did you not know," he said, "that I must be about my Father's business?" or according to the Greek text: "Knew you not that I must be in my Father's house?" Words full of respect and wisdom, addressed to the holy spouses for our instruction; for our Redeemer wished thus to show publicly that he had another Father, whose affairs on earth were the object of his solicitude: that at all times and places he was engaged with the good of souls, and that, finally, it was by the divine will, and not by Mary or Joseph's negligence, that this had happened: he at the time revealed to them that no human foresight can prevent the accomplishment of God's designs.

Here we should gladly transcribe the beautiful reflections which the Fathers and contemplatives make on the grief which rent the hearts of Mary and Joseph at the disappearance of the Holy Child. They behold in this grief, that of a soul which has lost grace, or which, at least, remains dry and arid, no longer experiencing that interior peace which is a foretaste of eternal felicity. In the reply of the Man God, they see the duty incumbent on every Christian to obey the will of him

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who alone has the absolute right to command,* and who then chose to conceal his most holy will from Mary and Joseph, who were ever holily resigned.

St Luke remarks that they did not understand what Jesus said.† Yet we cannot but believe that Mary and Joseph understood that their son, having God for a father, should prefer God's good pleasure to their own satisfaction; only, humbly believing the words of Jesus, they remained silent. There is, moreover, nothing astonishing in their not understanding the whole force of this reply, and what was the business of which Our Lord spoke; for God is wont to reveal his greatest secrets to his greatest servants and conceal them from others. We are aware that some have explained this text by saying that Our Lord's words were not understood by those only who happened to be present, but that they were

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* The reasons which we have already given to show with what wisdom the divine Redeemer concealed his resolution from his parents, are more than sufficient to justify Joseph, and especially the Blessed Virgin, and prove the care, which, on this journey, as at all times, they took of their divine Son. Yet we cannot, without indignation, hear the blasphemies of heretics, and especially of the Magdeburg Centuriators, on this point. They have been ably refuted by orthodox writers, and especially by Father Peter Canisius, of the Society of Jesus, in his Life of the Blessed Virgin, a book replete with doctrine and piety.

† The Fathers remark in Mary two acts of admirable humility. The first, Jesus made her exercise, by putting her on a level with other mothers, who act from human views, although the Blessed Virgin never acted so. The second, she performed herself, by submitting interiorly to the will of her son, since, without completely understanding his words, as we have seen, she did not dare to question him, in order to learn what she knew not. In fine, without citing the beautiful reflections of mystics on this conversation, we would tell parents that they should leave their children free to follow God's will, especially in the choice of a state of life; and would tell children that they should prudently keep secret their good and holy resolutions which would be contradicted to the detriment of their souls; for God is the absolute master of us all, and we must obey him alone in preference to all others.

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understood by the parents of the divine Child, or at least by Mary ; but this interpretation seems to us forced and subtile.

We cannot better terminate this chapter, than by citing the beautiful reflection of Cardinal Hugo on the mysteries which we have recounted : "The Wise Men," says he, "found Jesus in the house : the shepherds in the manger : Mary and Joseph in the temple." The first, who left their own country to find the Redeemer, are a figure of religious, who, leaving kindred and home, find Jesus in the cloister. The second are a symbol of pastors of souls, who find in the Holy Scriptures Jesus Christ, the true pastor of souls. Mary and Joseph are the image of sinners, who, after losing Jesus in the temptations of the world, find him in the temple among the doctors, that is, in their spiritual Fathers, who instruct souls, force them to groan over their faults, and by absolution in the sacrament of penance, reconcile them to God. Let us also consider how important it is for Jesus to remain with us : if by chance we lose him, let us promptly set out to find him, and not return till we have been united to him for ever.



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CHAPTER X.

MARY'S RETURN TO NAZARETH.—DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH.

DELIGHTED to have found the Child Jesus, the Blessed Virgin and her spouse returned with him to Nazareth, as joyous as they had been afflicted before. The divine Redeemer continued to reside in that humble city eighteen years more. This cannot be doubted, since, according to the Evangelist Saint Mark, he left it to be baptized by John* in the waters of Jordan, and thus began his preaching which he continued during the last three years of his earthly life. During this long space of time he lived ever humble, solitary, obscure, and Saint Matthew says nothing of him, but that he was subject to his parents. Thus the incarnate and eternal Word, who is the universal life and power of all things, lived banished in an humble workshop, and labored himself,

* "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan." (Mark i. 9.)

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obeying the least sign, and anticipating the least desire of his adopted father. The Holy Fathers make beautiful reflections on the trade which the divine Redeemer humbly deigned to exercise on earth, to aid his parents in their poverty. As for us, it is enough to say with Saint Peter Chrysologus,* that Christ was the son of an artificer, but of that artificer who made the fabric of the universe, not with a hammer, but with a single word; who established unity and harmony by his command, and by his divine breath kindled the sun. Nor had he less respect for his fond mother, who conversed with him as often as she could; so that it is sweet to believe that she was frequently in Joseph's shop, and while her spouse was working, she was employed in manual labors † and her son served her.

"I know not," exclaims St. Bernard,‡ "which most to admire, the condescension of the son or the eminent dignity of the mother. On both sides, we behold a strange prodigy: a God obey a woman—humility unexampled; a woman

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* Christus erat fabri filius, sed illius qui mundi fabricam fecit, non malleo sed præcepto, qui elementorum membra non ingenio sed jussione compegit, qui massam sæculi auctoritate non carbone conflavit, qui solem non terreno igne, sed superno carbone accendit. (*Hom. seu. Serm.* xlviii.) In the first chapter of the second book we have stated, that Joseph, according to the common opinion, followed the trade of a carpenter. Some taking the word faber in a general sense, on the authority of good Latin writers, who seldom employ the word alone, but mention the thing wrought, believe that St. Joseph was a goldsmith, builder, or dyer.

† She was probably engaged in spinning, sewing, embroidering; and to these labors she gave all the time not devoted to prayer, or the reading of the sacred books, continuing nearly the life which she had begun to lead in the temple. Hence we reject the opinion of those who pretend that she was skilled in literature, painting, &c.

‡ Mirare ergo utrumque et elige quod amplius mireris, sive filii benignissimam dignationem, sive matris excellentissimam dignitatem. Utrumque miraculum, et quod Deus fœminæ obtemperet, humilitas absque exemplo; et quod Deo fœmina præcipietur, sublimitas sine socio. (St. Bernard, *Hom. super Missus est.*)

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command a God—sublimity unequalled. The Evangelist notes this profound submission of Christ, and again says that he increased in wisdom and grace; now we hold for certain that the parents were the first to profit by his infinite wisdom, although they doubtless always waited to be asked, not having courage, through respect for him, to question him first, and ask the explanation of what fell from his lips, as the apostles often did with regard to their divine Master, when they did not understand what he said. Thus, then, in that holy and happy family, model of every Christian family, must have reigned a constant emulation of respect and obedience. O! what beautiful, what sublime and admirable things, Mary and Joseph must have heard from the very lips of the Incarnate Wisdom! How they must have treasured the least words! Doubtless they were in Mary's eyes a treasure which she preciously guarded in her mind, as the Fathers say; thanking God for having been chosen to be the Mother of the Saint of Saints, she meditated them in secret, to reveal them at the moment when the redemption of the human race was fully accomplished, and thus confirm the truth by the testimony of what she had seen and heard. Hence the august title of Queen of Apostles, a title with which the Church has honored her, is admirably significant.

About the time of which we are speaking is generally placed the glorious, yet afflicting death of St. Joseph, afflicting as it separated him from his dear spouse and tender son. Saint Epiphanius* says that he died in the twelfth year of our Lord, because after that period the Evangelists make no further allusion to him. St. Jerome thinks that he died a little before the baptism of our Lord, that is when Jesus was entering on his thirtieth year. Saint Cyprian,† Saint Am-

* *Hæres*, lxxviii. † *De Passione Domini.*

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brose,* and many others, think that he was present at the passion of our Divine Lord. For ourselves, we willingly adopt the opinion of Saint Jerome, both on account of his great authority in the interpretation of the Bible, and because, from the words of Saint Luke, "that he was subject to them," it is evident that Joseph did not die immediately after his return to Nazareth. It is probable that his death took place a little before our Lord began to preach, because he was then spoken of as one recently alive; thus we see that when the people were amazed at the words which fell from the lips of Jesus, they said: "Is not this the son of Joseph?"† Finally, had he been alive at the time of the passion, it is probable that our divine Redeemer would not have recommended his holy mother to Saint John, but to her spouse.

It is a pious and common opinion of the faithful, that Joseph did not die of a painful illness, but that, having attained an old age,‡ and gloriously fulfilled his august mission as guardian of the Blessed Virgin and foster father of Christ, he departed from this life, calm as a weary man who needs rest, and lays his head, with unclosed eyelids, on a moss-covered stone.

Hence it is sweet to portray him stretched on a little couch with his beloved spouse beside him, and casting a last look on the divine Child, who lovingly blesses and comforts him at that last moment. The holy old man, with a dying voice, asks pardon for not having fulfilled his duty to all as

* *Lib. de Instit. Virg.* c. vi., and in Luc. c. xxii.

† Luke iv. 22. See Matthew xii. 47.

‡ In the first chapter of the second book, where we gave the various opinions as to Joseph's age, when he had the glory of espousing Mary, we proved that he was far from old age. Supposing him to have then been forty-five, or forty-eight, and that he died about the twenty-ninth, or thirtieth year of Christ, he would be seventy-five, or seventy-eight at his death.

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well as he would have wished, and as the Son of God gave him an example, accusing his own weakness and unworthiness. The divine Redeemer thanked him for his care, his solicitude and love for him, and for the last time kissing the brow of the venerable man, assured him of the glory prepared for him in heaven. At these divine words Joseph's heart is encouraged, his eyes assume a heavenly sweetness, he cannot take them from Jesus and Mary ; turning them from one to the other, he finds in them at every glance more that is wonderful, ravishing, divine, so that he feels a poignant grief to think that he will be for a time separated from them. At last, while pronouncing with more strength and love those sweet and sacred names, his soul suddenly escapes from the prison of the body, and soars to Abraham's bosom, herald of the good tidings.

Were it permitted here to give reins to our imagination, we should show all the souls in that happy abode, coming to meet Joseph, and especially Isaias, David, his royal ancestor, Joachim and Anne, those happy parents of Mary ; but the gravity of our subject forbids this poetical imagery.* Hence resuming the thread of our touching narrative, we shall say

* From the lyric effusions of the illustrious Abate Joseph Borghi, the Tuscan poet, we shall cite with pleasure some strophes from a sacred ode in honor of St. Joseph.

Toil his daily bread supplies;
But in his all can sympathize,
Be it fear or carking care,
Or hope sublime that dwelleth there,
His blessed partner, even she,
The Virgin throne of mystery.
Now the work divine's at hand,
When peace upon the earth shall stand.
Joseph hies him first to spread
Glad tidings thro' the realms of shade.
"Fathers! raise your downcast eyes,
The Lord shall in his glory rise.
Stern Law to satisfy, the Word



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that the Redeemer and Mary, all his friends, all who knew him, mourned the death of the holy old man, and that according to custom, they buried the body, as Bede * tells us, in the valley of Josaphat, near the sepulchre of the holy Simeon.† There his bones reposed till the resurrection of Christ, for according to the common opinion of the doctors, he was of the number of the Saints, who arose with the divine Master. Often then did he rejoice in the presence of his beloved spouse, and at last on the fortieth day, with Christ, he ascended body and soul to heaven, thus enjoying the same glory as Jesus and Mary.‡

Man's fallen nature has not abhorred,
But sin hath borne, and grief and pain,
Yet when fell death ignobly slain,
He bursts the grave's relentless door,
Hell, sin, and death, triumphing o'er,
Then to the son's of Israel's pride,
Heaven's ivory gates shall open wide,
And round a standard in the cloud
The nations of the earth shall crowd."
Thus didst thou chant, O Joseph blessed,
To them that watched in Limbo's rest.

* Part. 3. Op. Alphab.

† It is commonly said that St. Joseph died on the 19th of March. Some believe that he fell sick at Jerusalem, where he went to celebrate the Pasch, and that he died soon after there. How could he have otherwise been buried in the valley of Josaphat ? We may answer, that in sacred history, we have many examples of persons wishing to be buried in a distant spot. Yet, we state frankly, that this is all conjecture.

‡ This is the opinion of Saint Bernardine of Sienna, who says: "As that family lived a laborious life on earth, so they reign body and soul in amorous glory in heaven." Saint Francis of Sales cites these words (*Works III. treat.* xix. civii.), and after adducing several proofs in support of the opinion, concludes that it is past doubt. (See Orosius, *Serm. II.*; Isolano, p. 4. c. xx.; Van Bernardine de Bustis, *Serm. XIII.*; Suarez and many others.) Another proof is that no part of the world boasts of possessing, or having possessed the body, or least particle of the body of St. Joseph, while relics of his cloak, staff, &c., are venerated. We willingly, indeed, range this fact among the things which God has chosen to conceal from men, and leave each one to follow what opinion he chooses.

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Such are the most authentic, or at least the most probable facts, that we can give as to the life of this just man. We have spoken briefly of his virtues, in the chapter treating of his marriage to the Blessed Virgin; but our pious readers must permit us to praise him again. We do not propose to cite, even in a summary, all that theologians and contemplatives have said of him, for we would have to write volumes; but we merely wish to show some of his principal privileges, and thus excite a great devotion to a Saint, who spent a great portion of his life with Jesus and Mary, and lavished on both his greatest care.

Saint John Damascenus says,* that the Holy Scriptures could not give Saint Joseph a more glorious title than that which it gives by styling him spouse† of the Blessed Virgin. John Eck adds well, that God, by giving Eve to Adam, wished to make her like her spouse, whose companion she was to be; still more should he do so by giving his blessed Mother an affectionate guardian, and his Son a diligent foster-father on earth.‡ We must consequently believe that Joseph, endowed with the most eminent virtues, was inferior in sanctity only to the Blessed Virgin.§ He was indeed the type of the justice which we should have towards God, for he scrupulously obeyed the law and all the commandments. He was the type of the justice which we should have in regard to our neighbor. He beheld his most chaste spouse pregnant, and chose the most equitable line of conduct. He saw our divine

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* *Orat. III. in Nativ. B. M. V.* † *Serm. de St. Joseph.*

‡ Let us make him a help, like unto himself." (Gen. ii. 18.)

§ It is sufficient to cite Suarez, who speaks thus of our Saint (Pt. III. t. II dub. 8.): "Non existimo esse temerarium, sed pium potius et verisimile, si quis fortasse opinetur sanctum hunc reliquos omnes in gratia et beatitudine antecellere."—"Not rash, but rather pious and probable, do I think the opinion, that this saint excelled all others in grace and beatitude."

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Redeemer pursued by Herod, yet uttered not a complaint against that barbarous usurper of the throne of Juda. He received the order to fly into Egypt, and set out at once. He lost the holy Child, and was not less diligent than Mary herself in seeking him. He never favored sensuality: he was in a manner dead to the world and the flesh, and desired only heavenly things.* Untiringly he proceeded from virtue to virtue, imitating God, whom, happier than the patriarchs of old, he had the glory of seeing invested with our mortal flesh, and over whom he possessed the sweet and holy authority which fathers have over their children.† Can we then be astonished to find that he was often visited by angels, and consoled by them in all his pains? In him we find at once a noble example of the contemplative and of the active life. Who can in fact be compared to him for the anguish and the heavenly consolations with which his heart was filled to overflowing? Who but bows low as he contemplates the extraordinary perfection of a saint, whose power is doubtless no less great in heaven than it was on earth? "We cannot doubt," says Saint Bernardine of Sienna,‡ "but that Christ grants him the respect, the filial love, with which he

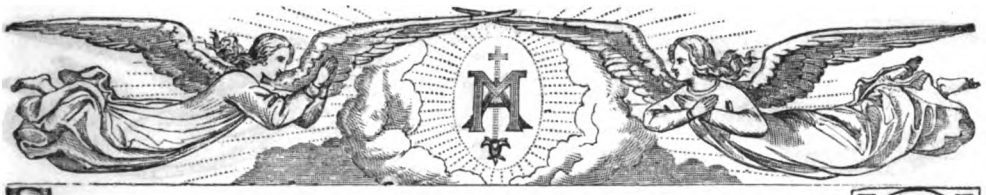
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* Sic mortuus erat mundo et carni ut nihil desideraret nisi cœlestia. (St. Bridget, *Revel.* B. VI. clix.)

† Josephus habebat in Christum jus paternum, puta omnia jura quæ habent parentes respectu filiorum. (Cornelius a Lapide *in Matt.* i.)

‡ *Serm. de St. Joseph.* Gerson speaks thus: Quantus existimandus est justus Joseph in gloria et in cœlis, qui talis ac tantus inventus est in miseria in terris! Profecto cum dicat Christus; Ubi sum ego, illic et minister meus erit: ille proximior videtur collocandus in cœlis, qui in ministerio fuit vicinior, obsequentior et atque fidelior post Mariam inventus in terris. (*Serm. de Nat. B. V.*)—"How great must we esteem the just Joseph in glory and heaven, who was so great amid earthly misery. Surely when Christ says: "Where I am, there shall my minister be;" he should, it would seem, be placed nearer in heaven, who was nearer by his ministry, and after Mary, more devoted and faithful on earth."

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honored him here below, and that glory which has received in heaven its crown and consummation. Hence we may apply to the spouse of Mary, the words which Pharaoh addressed to Joseph, the son of Jacob, when he made him the first man in his palace and in all the land of Egypt, the minister of his royal favor.*

In all our wants, then, let us have recourse to a saint so loved and privileged by God; confident that he will hearken to our fervent prayers. If his cultus seemed for a time unknown or neglected,† it has constantly increased more

* "Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey; only in the kingly throne will I be above thee . . . Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt . . . without thy commandment no man shall move hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." (*Gen.* xli. 40–44.)

† We cannot deny, that for several centuries the Church rendered no cultus to Saint Joseph, either because he was reckoned among the just of the old law, as dying before the publication of the new; or, he was not mentioned, in order to imbue the minds of the faithful more deeply with the mystery of the virginity of the sacred Mother, and the divinity of the Incarnate Word, as Son of the Eternal Father; or, in fine, because the Church at first honored only the memory of those who died to confirm the divinity of Jesus Christ, and to extend the Christian faith. Whichever of these motives prevailed, it is certain, that from time immemorial, the Greeks name him among the ancestors of our Lord Jesus Christ, and among the just of the old law, and have consecrated two Sundays to his honor, one before, and the other after Christmas. It is believed that the Orientals, and particularly the Scythians, Copts, and Egyptians, celebrate the solemn feast of his death on the 20th of July, to which day, from an erroneous tradition, they ascribe his death. It seems also that they confound him with Joseph, surnamed the Just, proposed with Saint Matthias for the Apostleship.

The Latins, in the ninth century, began to inscribe the name of St. Joseph in the martyrologies, and fixed his commemoration on the 19th of March, leaving the feast of Joseph the Just on the 20th of July. It is believed that the Carmelites, at the time of the Crusades, brought it from the east to the west; and this opinion derives force from the fact that we see Saint Teresa favoring devotion to Saint Joseph, as Gerson had already done. That learned chancellor composed an office in honor of the Saint, and wrote his life in a Latin poem, entitled "Josephina." Sixtus IV. is said to have first decreed the feast of St. Joseph at Rome, in 1481, but in a way that does not seem to be a first institution; but merely a



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and more, so that the Church, not satisfied with celebrating the commemoration of his death on the 19th of March, has instituted a particular feast in honor of his powerful patronage.*

As we do not deem ourselves sufficiently eloquent to speak of so illustrious a Saint, we shall let the Blessed Seraph of Carmel speak, as she by herself and by the reform which she has founded, propagated and perpetuated the beautiful devotion, and thus secured to all men innumerable benefits. "When I beheld myself at such a tender age, hopeless and abandoned by earthly physicians,† I resolved to have recourse to those in heaven to heal me. I took for my protector the glorious Saint Joseph ; I commended myself to him with all my heart ; and in that pressing danger, as in other greater straits where my soul's honor and ruin were at stake, Saint Joseph, my father and protector, delivered me better than I could have asked ; nor do I ever recollect to have implored that great Saint in vain. Indeed, the graces which I have obtained through the intercession of St. Joseph, and the dangers of soul and body from which I have been delivered, excite in me the greatest admiration. God, it seems, has granted to the other Saints to aid us in some particular case, while to

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restoring to new vigor. About the end of the 15th century it began to be celebrated in Germany and Spain. Cardinal Ximenes introduced it into his see of Seville. Gregory XV., in 1621, and Urban VII., in 1642, made it a holiday of obligation. Clement XI. at the intercession of the Nun Clara Colonna, of the order of St. Teresa, made it a double of the second class, and by a decree of 1714, approved the new office. Benedict XIII., in 1726, inserted his name in the great Litany. Pius VI. dispensed from certain holidays of obligation, and among others from that of St. Joseph ; but Pius VII. restored it in Italy in 1803.

* Benedict XIV., by a decree of January 20th, 1741, made instead of a double, a double of the second class, the office of the patronage of St. Joseph, the feast of which is celebrated the third Sunday after Easter.

† St. Teresa. Life, written by herself.

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Saint Joseph, so far as my experience goes, he has granted to aid us in all. It seems as if the Divine Word, after permitting Saint Joseph to command him here below, allows him in heaven the same right of adoptive father. Many persons whom I have urged to commend themselves to the same saint, have experienced like me, with gratitude, the effects of his powerful protection. Convinced by my own experience of the graces which he obtains for us of God, I would persuade all to be devout to this glorious Saint. Whoever has devotion to him advances rapidly in the path of virtue, for that great Saint comes to the relief of all the souls that recommend themselves to him. For many years I have always made some petition to him in his feast, and have always been heard. If my prayer needs rectitude, he seems to correct it for my greater good. Were I a skilful writer, I would fain describe one by one the signal graces which that glorious Saint has obtained not only for me but for many others. I only ask as a favor, for God's sake, that every soul would make the experiment ; whoever will invoke that glorious patriarch and be devout to him, will see how good and useful it is to address him. The pious should have a particular affection for him, for I do not understand how we can think of the queen of angels and of the holy childhood of Jesus, without thanking St. Joseph for the care which he took of the mother and the Son. He who needs a master to learn to pray, will find in Saint Joseph an infallible guide."

After this simple, touching, affectionate exhortation of an illustrious Saint, who spoke from her own experience and that of another,* we have only humbly to beg Mary's chastest

* We could speak without end of the wonderful effects of St. Joseph's patronage, in whose honor orders of knighthood, religious congregations, and pious confraternities have been instituted. Families, cities, provinces without number, have

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spouse to accept the humble homage we have paid him here, and to obtain for us that lively and sincere devotion, which we have sought as far as possible to excite in all hearts.

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placed themselves under his holy protection. Let us then recommend ourselves to so great a Saint, during our whole life, and principally at the hour of our death, because, as Saint Teresa says, God has filled St. Joseph's hands with great favors for us, if we are worthy to receive them.



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BOOK THIRD.

EMBRACING THE HISTORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, FROM THE FIRST MIRACLE WROUGHT BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AT HER INTERCESSION, TILL HER RETURN TO JERUSALEM, AFTER THE DEATH OF HER DIVINE SON.

CHAPTER I.

MARY AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA IN GALILEE.

PREVIOUS book portrayed to our admiration the immaculate Virgin bear the infant God, feed him with her virginal milk, bring him up with tender care, save him from the wrath of an impious King, find him when lost, and exercise over him a mother's sweet and holy authority; we shall, in this book, behold our august Lady, entirely taken up with our redemption, contributing to it by her bitter grief and the sacrifice which she made of herself. If, too credulous Eve was deceived by the snare of the devil, who wished to plunge her and the whole human race into the abyss, another wiser, happier woman, believing the words of



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a heavenly messenger, repaired, through the divine mercy, the fault of the first woman. We shall say then, with Richard of Saint Lawrence, that in the Blessed Virgin we have found abundantly and with usury all that we had miserably lost in Eve.*

The Blessed Virgin widowed of her dear guardian, had little to change in her habits of life, for she had lived with her chaste spouse, only in a noble emulation of the holiest virtues. But Mary's actions were to serve as an example to persons of her sex in every state. She had been the mirror of the maiden and the wife; she was now to be the mirror of the widow. Anne, the widowed daughter of Phanuel, is praised by St. Jerome and called blessed for having contemplated the face of God; these words apply better still to Mary. The apostle wishes widows to be dead to the world,† to persevere day and night in prayer; now Mary, become a widow, doubtless devoted to God all the time which she had previously given to pious converse with her chaste spouse, resigning herself entirely to the will of God in the loss of so dear a partner, so faithful a friend. It is past doubt that she directed her house with wisdom, provided diligently for all the wants of her divine Son, and neglected no obligation of her new state, interrupting her prayer only when other duties required it; for it is a great error, common to many, and often to those who aspire to perfection, to believe that we can serve God only by prayer and in Church. We must serve him in the condition in which he has placed us himself, and do his will by passing cheerfully from the contemplative to the active life. Without

* In Beata Virgine bona nobis data, et etiam plura et meliora bona quam prius, et quid amisimus nobis per Mariam restitutum est cum multo fœnore gratiarum. (*Lib. XII. Serm. II. de Nat.*)

† "But she that is a widow indeed and desolate, let her trust in God, and continue in supplications and prayers night and day." 1 Tim. v. 5.

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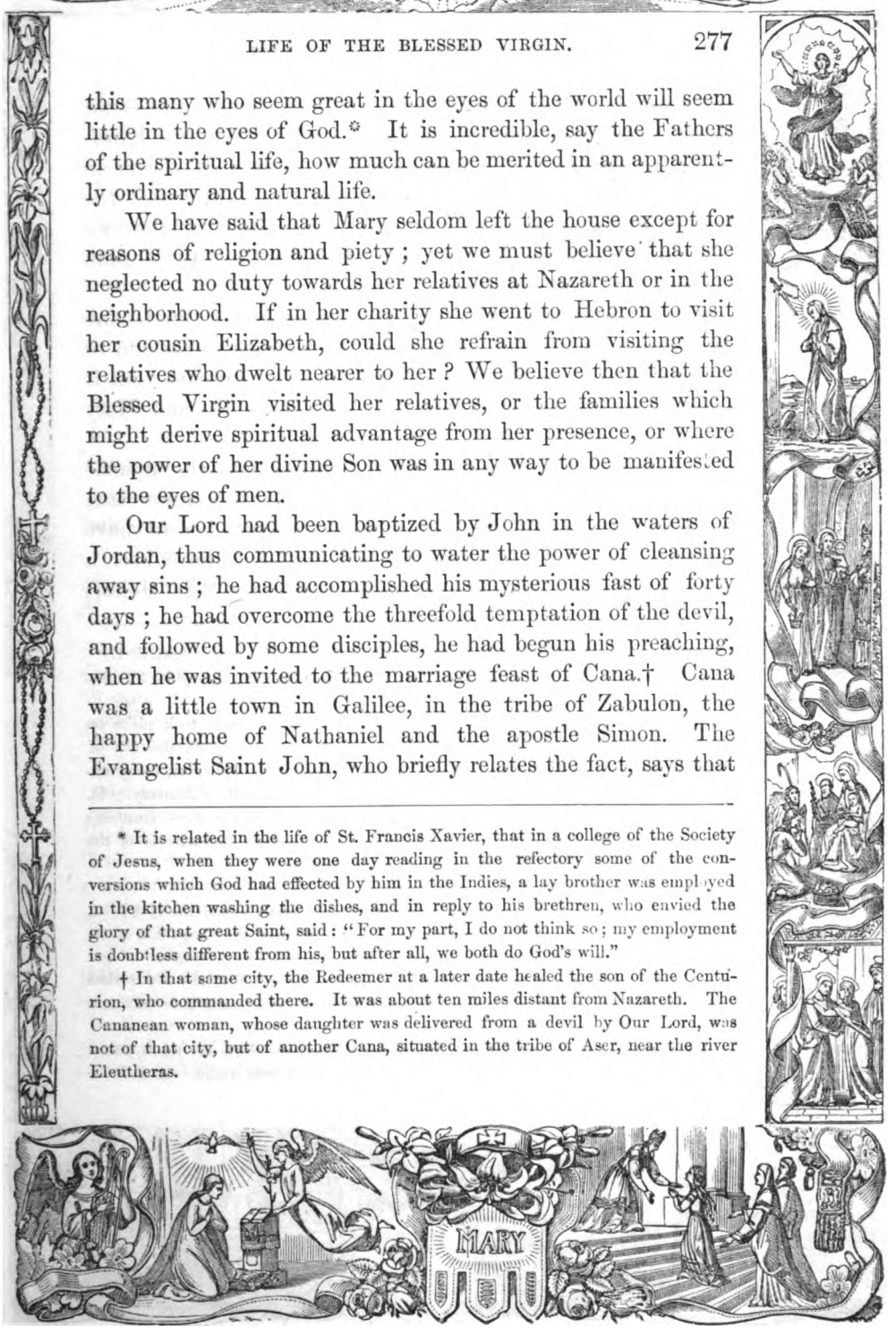
this many who seem great in the eyes of the world will seem little in the eyes of God.* It is incredible, say the Fathers of the spiritual life, how much can be merited in an apparently ordinary and natural life.

We have said that Mary seldom left the house except for reasons of religion and piety; yet we must believe that she neglected no duty towards her relatives at Nazareth or in the neighborhood. If in her charity she went to Hebron to visit her cousin Elizabeth, could she refrain from visiting the relatives who dwelt nearer to her? We believe then that the Blessed Virgin visited her relatives, or the families which might derive spiritual advantage from her presence, or where the power of her divine Son was in any way to be manifested to the eyes of men.

Our Lord had been baptized by John in the waters of Jordan, thus communicating to water the power of cleansing away sins; he had accomplished his mysterious fast of forty days; he had overcome the threefold temptation of the devil, and followed by some disciples, he had begun his preaching, when he was invited to the marriage feast of Cana.† Cana was a little town in Galilee, in the tribe of Zabulon, the happy home of Nathaniel and the apostle Simon. The Evangelist Saint John, who briefly relates the fact, says that

* It is related in the life of St. Francis Xavier, that in a college of the Society of Jesus, when they were one day reading in the refectory some of the conversions which God had effected by him in the Indies, a lay brother was employed in the kitchen washing the dishes, and in reply to his brethren, who envied the glory of that great Saint, said: "For my part, I do not think so; my employment is doubtless different from his, but after all, we both do God's will."

† In that same city, the Redeemer at a later date healed the son of the Centurion, who commanded there. It was about ten miles distant from Nazareth. The Cananean woman, whose daughter was delivered from a devil by Our Lord, was not of that city, but of another Cana, situated in the tribe of Aser, near the river Eleutheras.



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the third day they celebrated a marriage at Cana.* It is not easy to explain this expression. Some believe that the Evangelist means the third day after the arrival of Jesus in Galilee ; others maintain that it means the third day of the week ; others in fine say with greater probability,† that we must understand the third day after Our Lord left the Jordan to come into that province.

Nor is it less difficult to say to whose marriage Our Divine Redeemer was invited. We should be inclined to consign to the realm of fable the opinion of those who pretend that it was the wedding feast of St. John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalen.

Nicephorus ‡ believes that the spouse was the apostle Simon, surnamed the Cananean or the Zealous, because Cana signifies zeal. As to the bride, some suppose her to have been brought up with the Blessed Virgin or to have been a relative of hers.§ It would seem from the text of Saint John,||

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* And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. (John ii. 1.)

† This is the opinion of Origen (*in Joan.*), Toledo, Cornelius a Lapide, Silveira (t. II. lib. iv. c. 1), and others.

Baronius, with Lyranus, and a Lapide, think that this miracle took place on the 5th of March, adding, that if the Church commemorates it on the 6th of January, it does thereby fix the day on which it occurred. However, many ancient and modern authors think that it was performed on the 6th of January. St. Epiphanius (Hæres. li.) adds that in his time in some parts of the East, fountains of wine were set flowing on the 6th of January, in memory of the miracle of the wedding feast of Cana. This fact is cited by Baronius.

‡ Lib. VIII. c. 30.

§ Albertus Magnus, Torquemada, and Ludolph of Saxony in his life of Christ, say that her name was Anchita ; that she was from childhood the companion of the Blessed Virgin ; and that having preserved her virginity by the counsel of her spouse, she became one of the faithful servants of the Blessed Virgin. We rather believe that the Blessed Virgin went to the house of some relative or intimate friend whose name we know not.

|| The words of St. John in his gospel are : "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee ; and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus

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that Mary was at the house of these spouses, when Our Lord himself, invited to the nuptial festivities, came with his disciples. Who were the disciples, and what was their number? The Evangelist does not say. They were at all events Andrew and his brother Simon, Philip and Nathaniel, who had already devoted themselves to him, if there were no others: for Our Lord had begun to teach his heavenly doctrine, and disciples followed him.* He went to the marriage feast of Cana, either to honor marriage, as the Fathers unanimously affirm, for there have been heretics to condemn it as an abominable thing; or to elevate the dignity of the sacrament, and show the Church and the world that there can be on earth no wedding holy and agreeable to God without the presence of Jesus and his most Blessed Mother, that is to say, without the grace of the one and the protection of the other.

That all might be done with the respect due to God, and the consideration due the guests, it was the Jewish custom to

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also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her, Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters, Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water; the chief steward calleth the bridegroom and saith to him, Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him." (John ii. 1–11.)

* Saint Augustine (*De Consens. Evang. lib. II.*) thinks, that they are called by the Evangelist disciples by anticipation; the more so, as being Galileans, and near Cana, they had gathered to hear the preaching of Jesus, whose renown, already great in that city, induced the spouses to invite him to the wedding.

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have a steward at the table. Some believe that he was a priest:* he was called *architriclinius*, that is, chief of the triclinium.† It is a question whether the Jews sat around the table or used couches in the Roman fashion; but without entering into it, or inquiring whether the Blessed Virgin was at table with the rest, or only superintended the care and order of the feast,‡ we shall only say that, while the guests were served in a manner worthy of such a solemnity, an unexpected accident marred the innocent joy of the nuptial banquet. Whether the number of guests exceeded their expectation, or the director of the feast had miscalculated, the fact is, that the wine ran out at the moment when the party were animated with the greatest joy. The servants were in great distress, and knew not what to do. The Blessed Virgin, ever good, ever attentive to relieve our pain, in order to save the new married couple § from confusion and from displeasing the guests, approached our Saviour,‖ and

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* Lyranus *in John* ii. Baronius. Ann. 21, ch. xxii.

† *Triclinium*, composed of two Greek words, means a couch for three persons, and by antonomasia the dining room was also called triclinium. It was then the custom of almost all nations to recline at meals, and the Jews probably did so.

‡ St. Bonaventure. Life of Christ, p. 121.

§ "She was moved at their confusion, being most merciful, most benignant. What should flow from the fountain of mercy, but mercy? What wonder, I say, that the bowels of mercy should show works of mercy? Will not he who holds an apple in his hand half the day, preserve the odor during the rest of it? How much then did not the virtue of mercy imbue that shrine in which it rested for nine months! For it filled the heart before it filled the womb, nor left the former when it proceeded from the latter. St. Bernard. Serm. I. *in Dominic. post Oct. Epiph.*) Compassa est enim verecundiæ sicut misericors, sicut benignissima. Quid de fonte pietatis procederet nisi pietas? Quid inquam mirum si pietatem exhibent viscera pietatis? Nonne qui pomum in manu sua tenuerit dimidia die, reliqua diei parte pomi servabit odorem? Quantum igitur viscera illa virtus pietatis affecit, in quibus novem mensibus requievit! Nam et ante mentem replevit quam ventrem, et cum processerit ex utero, ab animo non recessit.

‖ Some say that she sat by our Saviour, and not among the women; others,

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interceding for them said: "My Son, they have no wine." Jesus saw that his Blessed Mother asked a miracle, and replied: "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.'* These words of our Divine Redeemer should not be understood, as impious sectaries pretend, in the sense of a harsh rebuke; but their meaning is: "Thou knowest the difference which exists between me and thee; thou askest me a miracle, now God can do it, and thou, his creature, canst not command him. The time to act has not come;" or else, as others explain, "The time has not come for thee to be the mediatrix of men with God."

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that she whispered to him. What Saint Bonaventure says, seems to us most probable, that is, that she was seated at table in a place of honor; and that she went up to Jesus, and asked him to perform a miracle. In fact, we see her afterwards command the servants like one of the mistresses of the house.

* The words of Jesus to his Blessed Mother were not the expression of a blame, nor a refusal, as heretics have stupidly pretended in their constant endeavor to detract from the privileges of the Blessed Virgin. They were not the expression of blame, as St. Justin (or the author of Questions and Answers to the Orthodox) says: "Illud non ad objurgationem dictum est matri a Salvatore, sed ut ostenderet nequaquam nos esse, qui vini in nuptiis consumendi curam suscepimus, sed tamen ex singulari charitate, si vis ne deficiat vinum, dic magistris ut faciant quæ dicam, ac videbis non eis defuturum vinum; quod et factum est. Nequaquam ergo verbis objurgasset quam actionibus colebat." This answer was not a refusal, inasmuch, as the Blessed Virgin, who understood its meaning well, bid the waiters do as her Divine Son should direct. Interpreters differ as to the sense of these words: "Quid mihi et tibi, mulier?" None, however, see any disrespect in them. St. John Chrysostom, in his 21st Homily on St. John, explains these words, "My hour is not yet come," by saying that the time when Mary was to pray for us had not yet come, because Christ had not yet confided her to St. John, to be the mother of all the faithful.

St. John Chrysostom in this passage remarks, that our Divine Redeemer waited till the wine was exhausted, so that no doubt could exist of the truth of the miracle, which he deigned to operate by virtue of divine omnipotence.

He calls her woman, and not mother, as he called her on the cross, because, as St. Jerome teaches us, this word in Hebrew has not the harshness that it has in ours; for among the Jews, the word woman was synonymous with mother.

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By either of these explanations, our Saviour's words contain nothing harsh, the more so as they were doubtless tempered by the celestial sweetness of his countenance and look. Moreover, the Blessed Virgin clearly understood the true meaning of these words, since certain of the miracle, she bid the servants, "Do ye whatsoever he shall say to you." Here we will remark with Silveira * that these words, the last words of the Blessed Virgin which the Evangelist cites, should afford us great consolation, as they show us that Mary's continual occupation is to intercede for us with her august Son.

It was the custom of the Jews, and especially of the Pharisaical sect, to have near the table large water-jars, in order that they might wash immediately, in case they should by any accident happen to touch any thing that might convey legal uncleanness. Many of them had by mistaken zeal introduced the custom of washing the hand and forearm during the meal. There were consequently in the room six large jars of two or three metretas or measures each; the metreta holding about seven gallons and a half. Jesus turning to the waiters, bid them fill these jars with water, which they instantly did: then he added: "Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast;" and they immediately obeyed, not understanding probably how he was to use it. When their full pitchers were carried there, the water was already changed into precious wine. When the steward had tasted this liquor, the best that he had ever seen, he could not help addressing his flattering reproach to the bridegroom: "Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." At these words all the guests

* Lib. iv. c. i. n. 86.

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turned to him; the bridegroom and bride were filled with astonishment, for they could not explain the fact; but the servants who had drawn the water knew, and made known the prodigy, which, passing from mouth to mouth, manifested the glory of Jesus.

The Evangelist says that Jesus wrought this first of his miracles at Cana in Galilee, to manifest his glory and excite the faith of his disciples in him. Nevertheless the commentators inquire whether this miracle was the first that Jesus performed, or whether he had wrought others. Saint John Chrysostom,* in accord with almost all the Fathers, Suarez,† Cornelius a Lapide‡ and many other commentators, think that this miracle was really the first miracle that Our Lord performed. But Saint Thomas,§ Salmeron,‖ Maldonado,¶ Toledo, and others deem it probable that it was indeed the first miracle solemnly and publicly wrought by Christ to make himself recognized, but that he had done others in secret or unknown to men. Is it not a miracle, says Maldonado, for a child of twelve years of age to confound completely the pride of the doctors in the temple? May we not believe that Jesus had already in his mother's house performed some secret miracle, and that for that very reason Mary asked him to perform another at the wedding feast of Cana? **

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* *Comm. in Joan.* ii. † 3. p. q. 13. art. 4. ‡ *In Joannem.*

§ Plenitudo omnis gratiæ et scientiæ animæ Christi secundum se debebatur ex hoc ipso quod erat a Verbo Dei assumpta. (3. p. q. 13. art. 4.)

‖ *Tr* 7. *in Joannem.* ¶ *In Joann.* ii.

** Yet in this I do not altogether agree with Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Euthymius, who contend that Christ had previously performed no miracle either in public or in private. For what do we know? Indeed we read that he had previously done something. For that a boy of twelve should dispute with doctors in the temple and confound them, is a miracle above nature. In the same way, it is very probable that he performed some miracle in private, which we have not in writing; we say it is probable, that as some teach, his mother had already seen

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We shall not deduce from this account the useful instructions, which should be given to the newly married to celebrate their nuptials piously, as we have already spoken on the subject at the commencement of the chapter; nor shall we inquire whether the miracle was granted to Mary's powerful intercession, as some say;* we shall not say with the mystics that this banquet prefigures the union of the Eternal Word with human nature, or of Christ with his church. Still desirous to derive from the fact an instruction for all ranks, we cannot do better than cite the words of the gentle doctor: "Our wedding has been already celebrated, since our souls are united to Christ; we have now but to enjoy the feast prepared in heaven. Will wine be wanting? No; on the contrary, we shall be inebriated with the plenty of the house of the Lord, and destined to the torrent of unspeakable delights. Here below wine is often wanting, that is, the grace of devo-

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him perform miracles in private, by which he at times relieved their wants, and that she was thus induced to ask of him a miracle in a similar want. I therefore understand this not as absolutely Christ's first miracle, nor his first there, but the first that he wrought to manifest his glory openly, as St. John himself says, and to show that he was the Christ." (MALDONATUS *in Joan.* ii.) We accept the opinion of Saint Gaudentius, who believes that the Blessed Virgin, full of the Holy Ghost, knew that her son was to perform the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana. His very words are: "Cæterum nunquam (Virgo) mandasset ministris 'quodcunque dixerit vobis facite,' nisi Spiritu Sancto post partum plena non solum responsionis Christi virtutem agnovisset, verum etiam faciendi tunc vini ex aqua conversum ordinem prævidisset. Quid enim lateret sapientia Matrem Dei et denique tantæ virtutis." (*Tract* ii.) "Otherwise, the Virgin never would have said to the waiters: 'Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye,' unless, filled with the Holy Ghost since her childbirth, she had known not only the power of Christ's answer, but even foreseen the changing of water into wine. For why should wisdom be hid from the Mother of God, the virgin of such consummate virtue?"

* Trombelli says that Mary's prayer was useful to the guests, because they would not have obtained the miracle, if the Blessed Virgin had not interceded; or if the miracle had been longer delayed, it would not have saved the spouses from shame. (*Dissert. XXX.*)

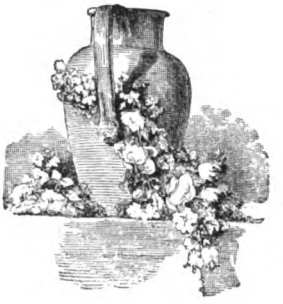
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tion and the ardor of charity. How often must we not pray the august Mother to tell her Son that we have no wine! Yet let us not despond; for if she is duly invoked, she will supply our wants, as she is not only merciful, but the very Mother of mercy. If she had pity on those who invited her to the wedding, how much more will she not have on us that invoke her? Our nuptials please her more than those of Cana, for our heavenly bridegroom is he who issued from her virginal womb." *

Let us never then, in our prayers, forget to have recourse to Mary. But if we would have that tender Mother's aid never fail, let us do what she recommends at the wedding feast of Cana: "Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." Now what do these words mean, if not that to be heard by her Son, we must necessarily be true disciples of the Gospel?

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* *Serm. II. in Dom. I. post Oct. Epiphaniæ.*



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CHAPTER II.

MARY IS FREQUENTLY PRESENT AT THE PREACHING AND MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

FROM Cana in Galilee, the Blessed Virgin went with her Divine Son to Capharnaum,* a city of the tribe of Nephthali, situated on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, where our Redeemer spent a great part of the three years of his preaching, and wrought numerous miracles. There he expelled the devil from the body of one possessed: there he cured Saint Peter's mother-in-law, the palsied man, the centurion's servant, the woman with the bloody flux, and displayed the most striking signs of his supernatural power. † St. John Chrysostom believes that Our

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* Capharnaum means in Hebrew the city of Consolation. Soliman, the Emperor of the Turks, reduced it to ashes, and scarce a vestige can be found in the few cabins which serve as a shelter to travellers.

† To their own misery, the people of Capharnaum profited but little by the graces which Our Lord bestowed upon them, insomuch, that the city was accursed by him when he foretold its entire destruction. St. John tells us that the people

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Lord resided ordinarily at Capharnaum,* in order that his most holy Mother might have a fixed abode to hear him, and not be obliged to follow him to and fro. In fact, while we know from the Gospel itself that several pious women attended to the support and living of Jesus, and zealously followed in his preaching, we see his Immaculate Mother with him only once or twice. St. Jerome tells us that it was the custom of the Jewesses to furnish their masters' food and clothing,† and that Our Lord accepted these gifts from their hands to show masters that they should be content to receive from their disciples what was absolutely necessary.‡ On the other hand, considering that Christ's mission was to instruct not only men but women, and that he wished in a manner to associate his blessed Mother in the work of redemption, we believe that the Blessed Virgin heard the sermons of Our Lord not only in Capharnaum, but in many other places, and that she was the first, the directress, so to speak, of those pious women, who, as we have said, followed Our Lord. This opinion is confirmed by the authority of several Fathers. Mary is called by St. Epiphanius the tireless companion of

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of Capharnaum were the first to doubt the real presence in the Holy Eucharist. "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? These things he said, teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum." (John vi. 53–60.)

* *Hom.* xxii. *in Joannem.*

† Cornelius a Lapide and Menochius (*in Vita Christi*) believe that the Redeemer passed from Cana to Nazareth, and thence to Capharnaum, a city ten or fifteen miles from Nazareth, as Ribera tells us.

‡ Consuetudinis Judaicæ fuit, nec ducebatur in culpam more gentis antiquo, ut mulieres de substantia sua victum atque vestitum præceptoribus ministrarent. Ministrabant Domino ut meteret eorum carnalia, cujus illa metebant spiritualia. Non quod indigeret cibis Dominus creaturarum, sed ut typum ostenderet magistrorum, quod victu atque vestitu ex discipulis deberent esse contenti. (*In Matt.* xxvii. 55.) Not to incur the reproach of self-contradiction, we refer the reader to what we said in the last chapter of the second book.

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Jesus.* St. Bernardine of Sienna † tells us that she followed him every where to take care of him ; that, attentive to all his words, she kept always near him.‡ Who better than she could know the Saviour's works, better understand the force of his arguments or admire the virtue of his prodigies? She saw his heart much better than others ; she understood what no other understood ; she comprehended more easily, retained more faithfully in her mind, the words of our Divine Redeemer, and explained to apostles and disciples what they had not understood. If, as we have remarked, she sought during the hidden life of Jesus to hear his heavenly doctrine, much more did she when that doctrine was publicly taught. From the ascension of her divine Son to the moment when she was assumed to heaven, was she not engaged in instructing the faithful? What a treasure of doctrine must she not have acquired constantly ! Now, could she do so better than by being present as often as possible at the preaching and miracles of her Son ?

Even had we no other facts to gather than those which the Blessed Virgin has been pleased herself to reveal to her dearest servants, or which the faithful now generally believe, could we not conjecture that she accompanied Jesus in his preaching, and that, by her example, she taught the pious with what zeal God's word should be heard? A proof of Mary's zealous assiduity at the preaching of her divine Son is

* *Hæres* lxxviii.

† Curam illius habens, sequens eum quocunque pergebat jugiter ejus adhæsit lateri, comes individua nullo fere abfuit itinere, intenta præ cæteris invigilabat verbo . . . Sola Salvatori actuum, insignium operum opera, mellifiua prædicationis genera, inaudita contra mundum et peccatum, et tartareum zabulum divinæ severitatis eloquia, quo ei diu interfuit, specialius vidit, secretius audivit, citius cognovit, propensius retinuit et apostolis aliisque discipulis luculentius edidit, diligentius retulit, melius indidit, fidelius tradidit. (*De Laud. Virg.*)

‡ Saint Jerome, *Serm. de Assumptione B. M. V.*—Lyranus, &c.

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Painted by Murillo. Engraved by W. Walker

THE INFANT ST JOHN.

And the Child grew, and was strengthened in Spirit
St LUKE, CHAP I^st VER 80

Edward Dungan & Brother, New York

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doubtless in the concord of the Evangelists Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke,* in relating the following fact: One day when Jesus was surrounded by an immense multitude, his blessed Mother and his brethren † sought to speak to him, to advise him, as Cajetan says, to take a little rest; or, as others believe, to withdraw him, under some pretext, from the fury of his enemies. They could not reach him for the crowd; now Jesus was informed of it, and replied to the messenger: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." Then stretching forth his hand to his disciples and all around him, he said as he gazed on them: "Behold my mother and my brethren." ‡ By these words the Divine Redeemer did not

* Matt. xii. 47.—Mark iii. 31.—Luke viii. 19.

† The cousins and near relatives of Our Lord are called his brethren in the Gospel, because, like them, he was born according to the flesh of the race of David. It is an impious heresy of Helvidius, refuted by Saint Jerome, Jovinian and others, to say that the Blessed Virgin had other children.

‡ "I see two probable answers to this objection," says Trombelli. (Pt. I. *diss.* xxi.) "Some say that Christ, who for thirty years was subject to Mary, till he began to preach the Gospel, showed by these words that he had undertaken that task, namely, of calling disciples, and instructing the multitudes. The words of Christ then according to them, have this meaning. 'I cannot longer enjoy thy society, O Mary, my mother; no longer share the circle of my kindred, for the preaching of the Gospel compels me to devote myself entirely to instruct my disciples and hearers.' Christ therefore seemed to neglect his mother and kindred, not that he really did, but that his mission compelled him to prefer the care and instruction of his disciples, to the wonted converse of his mother, and kindly offices of his relatives.—The other interpretation is, that Christ by these words, shows why he loved his mother; that is on account of her virtues, and his Father's will fulfilled by her; had she not fulfilled it, little would the dignity of Mother of Christ avail her, when he ranks piety above that dignity." This latter interpretation is given by Saint Augustine (*Epist.* 32, *ad Lætam*), and by Saint Hilary (Matt. xii. 47); and the former is preferred by Saint Ambrose (*Lib. VI. in Lucam*).

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say that he would not recognize as man his mother and his brethren, but he announced to the Blessed Virgin that the time of his public life had come, and that the dignity of Mother of God would have been useless to Mary, if she had not done God's will. In a word, he repeated in a manner what he had given us to understand at the marriage feast of Cana, that we must for no human motive neglect the service or will of God. Hence we shall never cease repeating that every one should in full and entire liberty follow the path through which the Almighty calls him.

By this reply, Christ recognized the maternity of the Blessed Virgin, and these words not only contain no reproach to her, as heretics pretend in their constant endeavor to tarnish the glory of the Mother of God, but also contains the greatest praise which God could give her. Such is the opinion of Saint Augustine in the commentary on the two preceding texts. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he," says Jesus, "is my mother, my brother, and my sister." Then, says the holy bishop of Hippo, by this additional title Mary is also his mother. By these words our Lord meant to glorify her, not for being his mother according to the flesh, but for doing the will of his Heavenly Father. When our Lord excited the admiration of the people, and manifested by his miracles his divinity concealed under the mortal veil, and a woman* amidst the crowd exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee," did not Jesus immediately answer, "Yea, blessed are those that hear the word of God and keep it?" Now by these words Jesus meant: "My mother,

* Luke xi. 27. Who was this woman that raised her voice amid the assembled throng? The Evangelist does not tell us. Some say that it was a maid-servant of Saint Martha, by name Marcella (see LYRANUS), or Stella (see Cardinal Hugo). For our part, leaving such curious erudition, we shall see with the Fathers in this woman, lifting up her voice in the crowd, an image of the Church itself.

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whom you call blessed, is blessed indeed; but because she hears and keeps the word of God, not because the Word hath dwelt in her." * Such is the opinion, not only of this great Bishop, but also of Bede and many others.†

From all these motives, we readily believe that Mary heard the sermon on the Mountain, that she saw the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, and the cure of the man born blind; that she followed Jesus towards the Jordan; that she went with him to Bethany, where she was present at the banquet of Simon the Leper, and where she contracted a close friendship with Magdalen and Martha, sisters of Lazarus; in fine, we believe that Jesus in the presence of his blessed Mother, spoke many parables, gave many precepts and warnings, and wrought in public a great number of miracles.

In consequence of the opinion adopted by us we may be asked, perhaps, why the Blessed Virgin was not present at the sublime miracle by which Our Lord gave his happy disciples, Peter, James and John, on Mount Thabor, an anticipated view of his glory, by showing himself to them in the splendor of his heavenly majesty, between Moses and Elias.‡ According to theologians, the reason why the Eternal Word gave his disciples this solemn manifestation of his glory, are precisely

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* Pulchre Salvator attestationi mulieris annuit, non eam tantummodo quæ Verbum Dei corporaliter generare meruerat, sed et omnes qui idem Verbum spiritualiter auditu fidei concipere et boni operis custodia vel in suo vel in proximorum corde parere et quasi aiere studuerint, asseverans esse beatos. Quia et eadem Dei genitrix et inde quidem beata, quia Verbi incarnandi ministra facta est temporalis; sed inde multo beatior, quia ejusdem semper amandi custos æterna manebat." (*Tract. in Luc.* xi. 28.)

† Maldonado, to prove that the answer of our Lord was not a reproof to the Blessed Virgin, employs this comparison: "A man who should say that gold is more precious than silver, would speak the truth, without denying the value of silver."

‡ Matt. xvii. 1.

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the reasons which should keep His blessed Mother away from Thabor.

By this august miracle Jesus Christ wished to prove to them his divine nature and incarnation. He preserved his human form, his countenance glowed like the sun, his garments became white as snow, and a voice issued from the clouds, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."* At these words the disciples fell with their faces to the ground, and were seized with great fear; nor would they ever have risen, had not Jesus, restoring their courage, bid them arise. Moreover, their divine Master, knowing the perils, anguish, pains, torments, even cruel death that his apostles and their disciples would have to suffer on earth, wished first to fortify them by a foretaste of the heavenly sweets which God reserves for them that fear him, in order that the recollection of what they had felt that single instant should make them firm and unshaken; even though what they had felt on Thabor, was only a shadow of that torrent of delight, with which they were to be filled eternally, on beholding God's glory in its fulness. In fine, he would have them never, like the Jews and Gentiles, be scandalized at his cross.† Now Mary's presence was required for none of these motives. She never could doubt of the divinity of Jesus Christ, since the heavenly messenger had revealed it to her; still less could she doubt the humanity of her Son, since she bore him nine months in her womb, brought him forth, and nourished him with her virginal milk. There was then no

* Peter was speaking, when a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came forth from the cloud, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." (Matt. xvii. 5.)

† In the first epistle to the Corinthians (i. 23), St. Paul says: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed as a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness."

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reason to give her this foretaste of heaven, either because her faith was lively, or because she could not, though Queen of Apostles, be, like the first preachers of the gospel, dragged before judges, and seal with her blood the divinity of the Messias and of the Holy Religion which he came to reveal to the world. In fine, Mary could not be scandalized at the cross, since, when the apostles and disciples took flight, she constantly remained, as we shall soon see, immovable at the foot of the blood-stained tree, and chose, intrepid Queen of Martyrs, to be the companion of Christ in his cruel sufferings. It was proper then that Mary, though loved and honored above the apostles themselves by her only Son, should not be called to witness on Thabor the manifestation which Jesus Christ made of his glory





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CHAPTER III.

MARY'S PAIN AT THE APPROACH OF THE PASSION.—PARTING OF JESUS AND HIS BLESSED MOTHER.

NEVER, as we have already said, did that prophecy of Simeon fade from Mary's memory, but remained the daily and nightly object of her thoughts. Hence, whenever the Blessed Virgin cast on her divine Child a sweet, loving look, she remembered at once that that body, the most beautiful ever seen on earth, was one day to suffer the most cruel pain, and be drenched in blood. Now, who can conceive the bitterness that filled the holy soul of the Blessed Virgin.

This natural, and by no means blamable grief, must necessarily have increased, as Mary beheld the time of the Redeemer's Passion draw nigh. Hence the birthday of her Son, that day which brings such joy to other mothers, was a day of unspeakable sorrow for her; in the thought, that since the last anniversary, the death of her divine Son was one year

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less remote. Then when he emerged from the silence of his humble abode, and began his public life, if she was consoled to see him traverse Palestine healing the sick and doing good, her joy was mingled with grief when she thought that her Divine Son was on the way to Calvary, where, after his three years of puplic life, he was to die on the Cross. For we believe that among the countless things of which the Scriptures do not speak, and which Jesus revealed to his most holy Mother, the mystery of the Passion was included. If the Redeemer consented to reveal to John * so clearly and so precisely, the man who was to betray his divine Master, may we not believe that he revealed to his blessed Mother the hour of his passion, the better to dispose her for that great sacrifice?

Who then could tell what was Mary's grief at the approach of that Pasch, which was to be the Divine Messias' last? For though in him she beheld a God, and ardently desired the redemption of the human race, she also beheld in Jesus the fruit of her chaste womb. She had lived with him for thirty-three years; and during all that time Jesus had been her companion, her beloved, the only object of her affection. She was to be deprived of him, and deprived of him for ever; for though she was ere long to behold him risen in glory, he was no longer to be with her a traveller upon earth, and she must first behold him die in ignominy between two criminals.

She beheld in the Passion of her Divine Son an excess of unnumbered and immeasurable sorrows,† because Jesus

* "But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written, every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." Thus speaks St. John, chapter xxi. 25.

† When Our Lord was transfigured on Thabor, Moses and Elias conversed with him on his departure from this world which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem:

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Christ wished to pay to the Divine Justice more than it required for the remission of the sins of men. Is it not true that, while a single sigh, a single drop of the Incarnate Word's blood, would have been sufficient to ransom thousands of worlds, Christ chose to shed the last drop of his blood, and thus render the expiation superabundant? Jesus represented the perfect exemplar, the august type, the source of all virtues, whence the just and the martyr were to derive strength and patience to suffer for justice' sake. Mary beheld in spirit the Eternal Father gather on the head of his beloved Son, the most terrible torments, the most bitter sorrows. She must then have been pierced through with the sword of grief, when she thought of the spiritual and exterior sufferings with which Jesus was to be overwhelmed. Mary saw clearly that Jesus' infinite charity was the sole cause of such great suffering, but she saw at the same time that so great a love and so great a sacrifice would be useless to thousands of men, because they would not profit by it.*

These considerations must have risen frequently to the mind of the Blessed Virgin, but especially in the period of which we speak; every week, every day, every hour as it glided by, must have heightened her maternal anguish; for

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"Dicebant excessum ejus quem completurus erat in Jerusalem." (St. Luke ix. 31.) This word *excessum*, mystics translate by excess, which expresses the greatness of the sufferings of the Son of God. St. Lawrence Justinian (de Agonia Christi) says that Jesus, in each of his torments, suffered all the sufferings of the just and martyrs. Justly then does St. Paul say that we have been bought with a great price.

* "What profit is there in my blood whilst I go down to corruption?" (Ps. xxix. 10.) There is no doubt that Our Saviour's Passion was to be useless to many; not that it was insufficient in itself; but because men, on their side, do not perform what is necessary for the salvation of their souls. Thus St. Paul says: "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh." (Colosa. i. 24.)

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as no one among created beings was ever more submissive to God's will, so none has suffered so much on earth, on account of the charity and mercy which filled her heart. God himself, says St. Bonaventure, enkindled in Mary the flame of his love for us; we cannot then doubt the anguish, the heart-rending of that heart which loved Jesus without measure, and which also without measure desired the salvation of men.

Mary had just seen or heard of her Son's entrance into Jerusalem seated on an ass; all the roads were strewn with flowers and branches; the crowd which led the way and followed cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" and the prophet of Nazareth was received in that city in triumph. Now, three days had scarcely elapsed when the chief priests and ancients of the people held a council in the house of Caiphas, to put Jesus to death; and his mother, as St. Bonaventure affirms, had heard it.* In fact, it was not the first time that they had wished to put our divine Redeemer to death. After his return from Egypt, no one persecuted him, as long as he led a solitary, hidden life. When he disputed with the doctors in Jerusalem, he was admired; he was the joy of all who knew him; but scarcely had he begun to preach his heavenly doctrine, and confirm it by countless miracles, than he found the whole world arrayed against him; the scribes, the priests, the Pharisees, the hypocrites set all to work to destroy him, and to bring the Just One to an ignominious death.

We shall briefly set forth these persecutions for the consolation and comfort of those who, imitating the Redeemer in

* This council was made known . . . What were the feelings of the mother of Jesus, when she heard that they sought to kill him? (St. Bonaventure, Meditationon the life of Christ, c. lxix.)

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his public life, suffer like him, insult, persecution, outrage and death. Our divine Master had recently begun his preaching, when the Pharisees who had succeeded in putting John the Baptist to death, attempted a new crime, by turning Herod's anger against our Saviour's disciples.* Jesus, to avoid their snares, left Judea, and again repaired to Galilee. Accused by the Jews of having violated the Sabbath by the miraculous cure of a paralytic on that day,† he found the temple a secure asylum from their pursuit. The people of Nazareth, provoked that the son of a mechanic, and a townsman of their own, should prefer himself to Elias and Eliseus, had endeavored to hurl him from the mountain top.‡ The Pharisees sought to stone him as a blasphemer, because he said that he had seen Abraham, and that from all eternity he

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* "When Jesus therefore understood that the Pharisees heard that Jesus made more disciples, and baptized more than John, (though Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples,) he left Judea and went again into Galilee." (John iv. 1–3.)

† "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, because he did these things on the Sabbath: but Jesus answered them: My Father worketh until now, and I work. Hereupon, therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he did not only break the Sabbath, but also said God was his Father, making himself equal to God." (John v. 16–18.) Cornelius a Lapide thus comments this passage: The priests and scribes sought to put Jesus to death, because they feared that his ever increasing glory would weaken their authority; and because they feared also, that if Christ persuaded the Jews of his divinity, he would be preferred by the people to the high priests themselves.

‡ "And all they in the synagogue hearing these things were filled with anger; and they rose up, and thrust him out of the city; and they brought him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and went down into Capharnaum." (Luke iv. 28–31.) Saint Ambrose remarks, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, the townsmen of our divine Redeemer, were worse than the devil, who took him to the pinnacle of the temple, but durst not cast him down. "Et pejor magistro discipulorum hæreditas; ille verbo Dominum tentat, hi de facto; iste dicit: Mitte te deorsum; illi adoriuntur ut mittant."

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knew the Father, because he was of the same nature as he.* They endeavored to alarm him by saying that Herod sought his life: † and finally they tried to put him to death at the feast of the Encænia, when by crafty interrogatories they made him affirm his divinity, in order to put him in fault. The priests and the whole Sanhedrim had thrice plotted his ruin, and if they had been forced to defer the execution of their criminal project, they had not renounced it. The first year, the objections of Nicodemus, a secret disciple,‡ had

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* "The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made I am. They took up stones, therefore, to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple." (John viii. 57–59.)

† "The same day there came some of the Pharisees saying to him: Depart, and get thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill thee." (Luke xiii. 31.)

‡ "Some therefore of Jerusalem said: Is not this he whom they seek to kill; and behold he speaketh openly, and they say nothing to him? Have the rulers known for a truth, that this is the Christ? But we know this man whence he is, but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: You both know me, and you know whence I am; and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom you know not. I know him, because I am from him, and he hath sent me. They sought therefore to apprehend him, and no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. But of the people many believed in him, and said: When the Christ cometh, shall he do more miracles than these, which this man doth? The Pharisees heard the people murmuring these things concerning him; and the rulers and Pharisees sent ministers to apprehend him; Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while I am with you; and then I go to him that sent me. You shall seek me, and shall not find me, and where I am, thither you cannot come. The Jews therefore said among themselves: Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What is this saying that he hath said? You shall seek me, and shall not find me, and where I am you cannot come. And on the last and great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth in me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Now this he said of the Spirit which they should receive, who believed in him; for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Of that multitude therefore, when they had heard these words of his,

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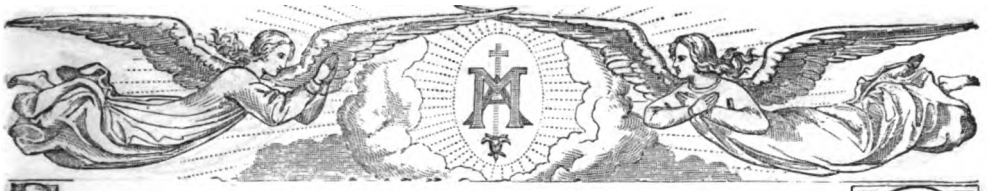
prevented their putting Jesus to death; the second year, when the Council was called after the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus avoided their fury by withdrawing to Ephrem.* Now

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some said: This is the prophet indeed. Others said: This is the Christ. But some said: Doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Doth not the Scripture say: that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the town where David was? So there arose a dissension among the people because of him, and some of them would have apprehended him; but no man laid hands upon him. The ministers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them: Why have you not brought him? The ministers answered: Never did man speak like this man. The Pharisees therefore answered them: Are you also seduced? Hath any one of the rulers believed in him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed. Nicodemus said to them (he that came to him by night), who was one of them: Doth our law judge any man, unless it first hear him, and know what he doth? They answered and said to him: Art thou a Galilean? Search the Scriptures, and see that out of Galilee a prophet riseth not. And every man returned to his own house." (John vii. 25–53.)

* Many therefore of the Jews who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done. The chief priests therefore, and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone so, all will believe in him, and the Romans will take away our place and nation. But one of them named Caiphas, being the high priest that year, said to them: You know nothing: neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not . . . From that day therefore, they devised to put him to death. Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but he went into a country near the desert, unto a city that is called Ephrem, and there he abode with his disciples." (John xi. 45–54.) We think our readers will be pleased with a few words on the tribunals of the Jews. Baronius says that there were three. The first was composed of three judges, who had cognizance of unimportant causes. The second, composed of twenty-three judges, was called the Lesser Sanhedrim; great causes were carried before this tribunal. The third, consisting of seventy-two judges, had cognizance of the most important matters, as for example, questions relative to the nation, the law, the king, the prophets, and the high priest. The institution of this tribunal went back to Moses and the divine precept. (Numb. xi. 16.) The members of the great sanhedrim were the twenty-four chief priests, that is, chiefs of the twenty-four sacerdotal orders, hence called pontiffs, and besides some of the principal Scribes and Pharisees. The

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although the Blessed Virgin might, by these examples, have conceived the hope that this time too her divine Son would escape their pursuit ; yet she knew that the hour fixed by the Eternal approached, and she saw by several actions of her divine Son, that he had but a short time to remain on earth. Jesus had told his apostles that he had long most ardently desired to celebrate that last Pasch with them ; the Blessed Virgin had thus learned the speedy death of her divine Son, if she had not learned it otherwise by other exterior acts ; for we believe that this tender mother, in those last moments, kept her eyes ever riveted on Jesus, and was present as far as possible at all his conversations.

Our Redeemer had returned from the garden of olives to Bethany, and was preparing to inaugurate his bitter passion by sending two of his disciples to Jerusalem, to make ready the Pasch, when, ever loving and submissive to his mother, he in the first place announced to her what he was about to do. The Gospel does not indeed mention the last farewell of Christ to the Blessed Virgin ; but all ascetics believe in this last conversation, because it is honorable to Mary and glorious to Jesus. We shall here cite the very words of the Seraphic Doctor : * "When the supper was ended, the Lord Jesus

president was the high priest, whose dignity was for life and immovable, as the Romans established it in the time of Caiphas, who several times resigned and resumed the supreme pontificate.

* Cœna facta, vadit Dominus Jesus ad matrem et sedet cum ea, seorsum colloquens cum ea, et copiam ei suæ præsentiæ præbens, quam in brevi subtracturus erat ab ea. Conspice nunc bene ipsos sedentes et quomodo Domina eum reverenter suspicit, et cum eo affectuose moratur ; et similiter quomodo Dominus reverenter se habet cum ea. Mater charissima, voluntas Patris est ut faciam Pascha in Jerusalem, quia tempus redemptionis advenit : modo implebuntur omnia quæ de me scripta sunt, et facient quidquid volent. Dicit Mater, vix valens verba formata proferre : Fili mi, tota concussa sum ad vocem istam, et cor meum dereliquit me. Provideat Pater, quia nescio quid dicam. Nolo sibi contradicere ; sed si ipsi



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goeth to his mother, and sitting with her apart, converses with her, giving her the consolation of his presence which he was so soon to withdraw from her. Regard them now well, sitting there, and see how reverently Our Lady regards him, and affectionately lingers by him: and in like manner how reverently Our Lord acts towards her. O dearest Mother, the will of the Father is that I eat this Pasch in Jerusalem, because the time of redemption has come; now shall be fulfilled all that is written of me, and they shall do what they will. His Mother, scarce able to utter the articulate words, says: My Son, I am all shaken at this word, and my heart fails me. May the Father provide, for I know not what to say. I will not gainsay him: but if it be pleasing to him, ask him to defer it, and let us eat this Pasch here with our friends; and if it be pleasing to him, he will be able to provide for redemption without thy death, for all things are possible to him." *

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placeret, roga eum ut differat præsens et faciamus hic Pascha cum istis amicis nostris; ipse vero, si sibi placeret, poterit de alio modo redemptioni sine morte tua providere, quoniam omnia possibilia sunt ei." (*Med. in vit Christi.*)

* This opinion was very common in the middle ages; and cannot be condemned; for it is very true, as we have said above, that the Eternal Father might have declared his justice satisfied without the death of his Son. Yet once that he had decreed, it must take place. As we have already cited some classic poetry, we cannot omit a noble and beautiful description of the last interview between Jesus and his mother; it is taken from an ancient poem on the Passion of Our Lord, and proves still better the pious tradition of which we have spoken. The poem is founded on a meditation of Saint Bonaventure's, of which there is also a prose version in Italian of the best epoch. The scene is at the same village of Bethany, at the moment when the Master, having called to him Peter and John, bids them go to Jerusalem and make ready the supper, because the time of his death had come.

Hearing these words the gentle Magdalene,
With long drawn sigh, "My Master dear," exclaimed;
"And wilt thou leave us, sad and plunged in grief?
Master, depart not!" Martha too, in tears,

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Saint Catharine de Ricci, Virgin of the order of St. Dominic, honored by her heavenly Bridegroom with the most signal favors, had, among others, that of seeing in ecstasy the

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Her sister joined, and deeply pleading cried:
"Ah knowest thou not, dear Lord, the priests and princes all
Thy death have now ordained? Oh leave us not!
Stay with thy mother!"
"Be consoled, my friends;
Within the city walls this Pasch I needs must eat."
In bitter tears the Magdalene turned aside,
And falling at the sacred Mary's feet, she cried:
"Mother! thy son upon dread Sion's hill,
This Pasch prepares to eat! My soul is dark!
My heart with grief and terror is transpierced!
O holy mother, let him not depart.
He sure will die!"
Then with a shuddering cry
The Virgin Mother spoke: "My blood runs cold
Within my inmost veins."
With faltering steps
Her Son divine approaching, she essayed to speak;
But her voice failed her: at last utterance came,
Faint and confused. "O Jesus! O my life!
My soul is pierced with grief: for I have heard
That thou wilt leave us, in Jerusalem
The Pasch with thy disciples to fulfil.
Beloved Son! for my sake do not go!"
With look of love, her Son divine replied:
"So much, dear mother, do I love man's race,
That for its good, even death I will embrace.
Dry up these tears that rend my anxious heart:
Give me thy blessing, mother! for the will
Of my Almighty Father I will now obey."
Prone at his feet the Virgin fell dismayed;
Tears bathed her beauteous face; and fainting there,
Her heart would sure have broken, could human pain
The heart-strings rend.
Jesus, all moved and sighing,
Raised with his loving arms his mother lorn.
"Pity me, Son! Let death mine eye-lids close,
Lest I behold thee die. O let me rest."
"Thy words, dear mother, rend my heart:
Bitter beyond my sufferings feel I thine! Upon
The cross shalt thou behold me: for me
The sun and moon shall veiled be; my lips
With gall and vinegar be sated. Bathed in blood,
Before thy eyes I must expire. Farewell."
"My Jesus, dear, what dreadful words are these!

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passion of the Divine Redeemer, and witnessing in spirit that last interview. She relates that it lasted no less than four hours, because Jesus set before the eyes of his august mother all the interior pains and exterior sufferings that he was to undergo during the last two days of his mortal life.

Every mother's heart, every heart that loves God, can imagine the anguish of that tender and painful scene. Jonathan and David, who poured forth such bitter plaints when they parted for ever; the Ephesians, who were moved to tears on witnessing the departure of Saint Paul; offer but weak pictures of that cruel separation, in which Mary generously co-operated by her consent to the death of her divine Son, and an obedient Son for the last time renders to his holy mother

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O what a bolt of heaven hast thou discharged
Upon me! What agony is mine if thou wilt go!
Ah! now do I perceive the cruel sword,
Which Simeon saw my inmost soul transpierce.
O Son benign, thy mother lorn forsake not."
"Ah think thee, mother, said that Son divine,
Think thee, how much upon my death depends;
Burst shall the fetters be that bind the past,
By which the patriarchs shall delivered be,
And Satan vanquished. Lay up these my words,
By death's dark door shall I in glory come."
Then at his feet imploring fell Mary,
And Martha, and the group of friends in tears.
"Mercy," exclaimed the Virgin, as she spoke
The Son's thrice holy name.
While all in grief
Jesus implored to stay, the plaintive mother's
Voice again: "My hope, my trust, my love!"
And clasping him within her Virgin arms,
She blessed him. "O my Son, what mortal pain,
That I shall ne'er beheld thee more!"
But Jesus
Upon his mother gazed, and calm returned,
As though that look had banished death away;
"Check, Queen of Heaven, thy grief's impetuous course;
My hour has come: Mother, permit my will."
Again she clasped his form, and sobbing cried,
"My Son, how dost thou leave me!" On his cheek
Her own she pressed! "My Jesus, thou'rt the sword
Piercing my soul. What shall I, sad and lone?"

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the most sincere homage of his obedience. "O love, oh resignation, oh unparalleled fortitude! O admirable mercy of the Father and Mother of Jesus towards us! O unspeakable love of the charity of God and the Virgin, who to ransom a slave gave to death their beloved son," cries Saint Bernardine of Sienna. *

* O mira circa nos utriusque parentis Jesu dignatio! O inæstimabilis Dei et Virginis dilectio charitatis, qui ut servum redimerent communem filium tradiderunt. (*Serm.* lxi. c. 4.)



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CHAPTER IV.

MARY HEARS OF THE ARREST OF JESUS, AND FOLLOWS HIM TO CALVARY.

IF Anne, the mother of Tobias, was inconsolable because she did not see her son return, that son whom she styled the light of her eyes, the staff of her age, the comfort of her life, * how inconsolable must the Blessed Virgin have been, when Jesus left her, not for a journey of some days, like Tobias, but alas for ever? Full was she of joy, † as long as he she loved dwelt with her, when she beheld him seated at table, or heard his heavenly converse. If a sweet consolation had formerly overspread her heart, she must now be a prey to a bitter sorrow, and feel all the aching void, that such a loss left in her heart. For although Mary, as we have already said, was

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* Tobias, x. 4.

† Gaudio replebatur quando eum tantopere diligebat secum degentem, secum edentem, et dulci affectu docentem habebat. (St. Anselm, *de Excell. Virg.* c. iv.)

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resigned to the divine will, and to obey God, would, like her father Abraham of old, have struck the victim,* yet she felt fully the force of maternal love. Her sacrifice was not inferior in perfection or obedience to Abraham's, for she bore with unspeakable firmness, a suffering, which without the help of divine power, no mother's heart could have borne. In this chapter and the next we shall endeavor to sound in part this fathomless abyss of sorrow.

As we have said after the most esteemed authors, the Blessed Virgin dwelt at Capharnaum, where she had probably as companions, Magdalen, Martha, and other pious women, who, knowing that Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate his last Pasch, were sad and mournful, yet endeavored to console a mother, the more worthy of consolation as her sacrifice was greater and more generous. O what a cruel night! Saint Bonaventure † says, that Mary watched, while the others rested. We believe with the pious Blosius ‡ that the Blessed Virgin, filled with the Holy Ghost, saw in spirit all the outrages that her son suffered during that horrible night. We do not believe, what some say, that the Blessed Virgin eat the last supper with our Saviour in Jerusalem, even in another room or in another house.§ Still less are we of the opinion of

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* Neque enim credendum est minoris fuisse perfectionis et obedientiæ ad Deum, quam Abraham qui proprium filium donavit Deo in sacrificio propriis manibus occidendum. Si nullus fuisset qui filium crucifigeret, ut adimpleretur voluntas Dei, ipsa posuisset in cruce. (St. Anselm *apud. S. Antonin.* iv. tr. xv.)

† Sine somno duxisti, et soporatis cæteris vigil permansisti. (*In Vita Chr.*)

‡ Satis credibile est, quoniam plena erat Spiritu Sancto, vidisse in Spiritu omnem dolorem et cruciatum, quem unicus ejus nocte illa horribili expertus est. (*In Margar. Sp.* p. III. c. vi.)

§ Paleotto (de Pass. chord. 7. c. ii.), and Silveira (Lib. vii. c. vii. numb. 178), say that the Blessed Virgin eat the supper in the same room as Jesus and his Apostles. According to Christopher de Castro (c. xvi.), and Barrada (IV. Lib. I. c. xvii.), on the authority of Metaphrastes (*de Ort. et dormit. Deip. apud Surium*), the women who followed Jesus did not eat at the table with the Apostles, but in ano-

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those who pretend that Saint Peter communicated her after our Divine Redeemer had instituted the Blessed Eucharist on that memorable evening.

While Mary was in her chamber she beheld John come at an early hour, accompanied by other friends, to tell her more by tears than words the horrible outrages offered to their divine Master during that fearful night. Others say that an Angel had announced to Mary the arrest of her divine Son; but we rather believe, with others, that this tidings was brought by the beloved disciple. In the first place, if Mary, as we have shown, knew it, it was not necessary that the ministry of an angel should be employed to inform her. In the second place, John knew the love that his divine Master had for his mother: now if, as is commonly believed,* he was the disciple with Simon Peter, who, full of attention to the latter, took him into the high priest's house, he must have been the more touched with pity for Mary, whose unspeakable grief he could imagine We therefore believe that, on leaving that house, he hastened to the Blessed Virgin to impart the sad tidings, and afford her some consolation during the short time that he was absent from his divine Master.

As soon as Mary heard John relate the torments which Jesus had suffered in that cruel night, and learned how her divine Son had been seized by a brutal soldiery, led from the Garden of Olives to Jerusalem, dragged, with a thousand outrages, before Annas and Caiphas, and cast into a dungeon,

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ther chamber, where the Blessed Virgin fulfilled towards them the same duties of humility that Christ did to his Apostles. This opinion is now generally rejected by the best critics, and is triumphantly combated by Trombelli (*Part I. dissert.* xxxiv.), who devotes himself especially to the refutation of Virgil Seldmayr, a paradoxical writer. (*Theologia Mariana*, p. xi. *quæst.* vii. *art.* 6.)

* And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple; and that disciple was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high priest. (John xviii. 15. See JANSENIUS and CALMET.)

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and how at last all the people with loud cries demanded his death, the Blessed Virgin at once left her retreat and hastened to Jerusalem.

If the son of Abraham was led upon the mountain to be immolated, his mother did not witness that great act, nor even know it, as almost all the Fathers affirm; for her maternal heart would have been exposed to too great a trial, and she would, perhaps, have expired at the very idea of so great a sacrifice. Such was not Mary's condition! The Evangelists, it is true, in the account of the painful passion of the Son, say nothing of the mother, except that she stood at the foot of the cross. Was she present at the bloody flagellation and crowning with thorns? Did she behold the people convoked by Pilate? Did she hear his sentence of death? Many maintain the opinion that she did, others combat it.

Saint Bonaventure,* Saint Anselm,† and many other ascetical writers maintain the affirmative, and number Mary among the holy women who in tears followed the Man-God afar off, and were so piously consoled by him. Trombelli denies it absolutely,‡ and will not have Mary mixed in and confounded with the pious, but weak and despairing crowd. Yet the Blessed Virgin, in the book of the Revelations of Saint

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* *In Vita Chr.*

† O Domina! quos fontes lacrymarum dicam erupisse de pudicissimis oculis tuis cum attenderes unicum filium tuum innocentem coram te flagellari, mactari et carnem de carne tua ab impiis crudeliter dissecari! (*Stim. deo. amor.* c. iv.)—"O Lady, what founts of tears shall I say gushed from thy most chaste eyes, when thou didst behold thy only innocent son scourged and mangled before thee, and flesh of thy flesh cruelly torn by the impious."

‡ At cruci tantummodo adfuit: cave enim putes iis mulieribus fuisse admixtam quæ de Christo ad necem deducto dolebant. Has enim flentes novimus: Virginis etiam constantia in eo etiam summa fuit, quod nullos gemitus, lacrymas nullas, dum Christo patienti adstitit, fuderit. (*Part I. diss.* xxxvi.)

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Bridget, says that she was present ; and as we have proposed to rely on these revelations, as far as intelligent criticism permits, we do not hesitate to believe that our august mother wished to see with her own eyes this mournful drama, or at least met our Divine Redeemer, when bearing his cross, and overwhelmed with the insults of an unbridled populace and soldiery, he passed the gates of Jerusalem to proceed to Calvary. "O mother of sorrow!" piously exclaims Saint Bonaventure, "why wast thou unchecked by the clamor of the mob, the clang of arms, the fury of madmen, or the troop of demons who had taken possession of these wretches? All was braved by thee, because thy heart was filled with a mighty sorrow!"* "Mary," says Saint Anselm,† "saw her son bound, and could not burst his bonds ; she saw him wounded, and could not dress his wounds ; she saw his divine face bathed in blood, and could not wipe it ; she wished to draw nigh and press Jesus to her heart, and was repulsed."

* Cur non te tenuit, O Domina, multitudo vulgi, nec armorum frequentia? Cur non te tenuit clamoris vehementia? Cur non te tenuit stultorum insania? Cur non te tenuit dæmoniorum caterva? Id non considerasti, quia cor tuum alienatum erat a te præ immenso dolore. (Stim. Am. p. I. c. iv.) A pious tradition says that Jesus saluted his mother by these words: *Hail, Mother.* Faith, says Chateaubriand, is not opposed to this tradition, which proves also, how the marvellous and sublime story of the passion has remained graven in the memory of man. Eighteen centuries have passed; endless persecutions and numberless revolutions have failed to efface the remembrance of a mother mourning for her Son! Father Géramb, in his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, says, that on the spot where the Redeemer met his Blessed Mother, a church was erected under the title of *Mother of Sorrow;* that the road which led to Calvary, and by which our Redeemer passed, no longer exists, but that it is covered with houses, amid which rises a tall column marking the ninth station. He adds, that Turkish fanaticism studied to render the access more difficult, by heaping up mounds of filth, so as to keep the Christians off.

† Vidit ligatum et solvere non potuit: vidit vulneratum et vulnus ligare non valuit; sanguinem in faciem fluere, et abstergere nequivit: voluit amplecti, et non fuit permissum.

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Mary's maternal love far surpassed the love of other mothers; * she was the more afflicted and saddened as she knew better the merit, the sanctity of her divine Son, and understood better the motives for which he suffered; for, as Saint Augustine teaches, where there is most intelligence, there is most love. To be so near Jesus, and witness the spectacle of his divine martyrdom, is in Mary a fortitude beyond all fortitude; a pain surpassing all pain, that no words can express!"

For ever separated from Abraham her spouse, the unhappy Agar, with her beloved Ismael, wandered in the wilderness of Bersabee; the water, with which she had filled her jar on starting, was spent; she sees her child perishing with thirst. In vain she seeks a spring, a drop of water to moisten the parched lips of Ismael; in vain she implores the clouds to pour down a kindly shower. The wretched mother has not courage to approach her son: she sits down an arrow's distance from him, and raising to heaven her streaming eyes, she said: I shall not see my son die; I cannot resist so great a trial. When lo, an angel piously consoles her, and points out a fountain of water; and thus was the father of the Ismaelites saved from death. † Mary was not like Agar; she draws as near her son as possible; not only does her maternal love not

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* Superat quippe etiam omnium creaturarum amores magnitudo amoris Virginis in filium suum, et dilectionis immensitas, quæ liquefiebat animam ejus in eo. (St. Bernardine, *Serm. de Nom. Mariæ.*)

† "Abraham rose up in the morning, and taking bread and a bottle of water, put it upon her shoulder, and delivered the boy, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Bersabee. And when the water in the bottle was spent, she cast the boy under one of the trees that were there. And she went her way, and sat over against him a great way off, as far as a bow can carry, for she said, "I will not see the boy die;" and sitting over against, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy, and an angel called from heaven to Agar." (Genesis xxi. 14–17.)

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keep her away, it excites her to ascend Calvary * with him, and behold him die on the cross.

O mother, stop! Holy women, lead to your home that afflicted mother! Her eyes have witnessed enough, her heart has already suffered too much! Alas! the path she has trod is red with the blood of her son, so that she can follow the steps of Jesus in his crimson footprints.† But no, let her pass freely, and let us rather follow her to the mountain of sorrow and myrrh; there Jesus will give her as a mother to John, and she shall thus become the mother of all believers.

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* Golgotha, a slightly elevated mount near Jerusalem, north and west of the city. Tertullian, Bede, Saint Augustine, Saint Hilary, Saint Jerome, Saint Cyril and others believe that Golgotha is in the centre of the globe; and that thus was literally verified what David said of Christ: "He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth." (Ps. lxxiii. 12.) Be that as it may, it is also called Calvary, because, according to an ancient tradition, the bones of Adam were saved in the ark by Noe, and then distributed to his sons; the skull fell to Sem, and was buried by him on this mountain, or rather it is called Calvary, on account of the number of skulls strewn around, because there criminals were buried. Silveira (Lib. VIII. c. xiii. n. 15), on the authority of Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Venerable Bede, and Lyranus, believes that on this mountain took place the sacrifice of Isaac, the figure of Christ.

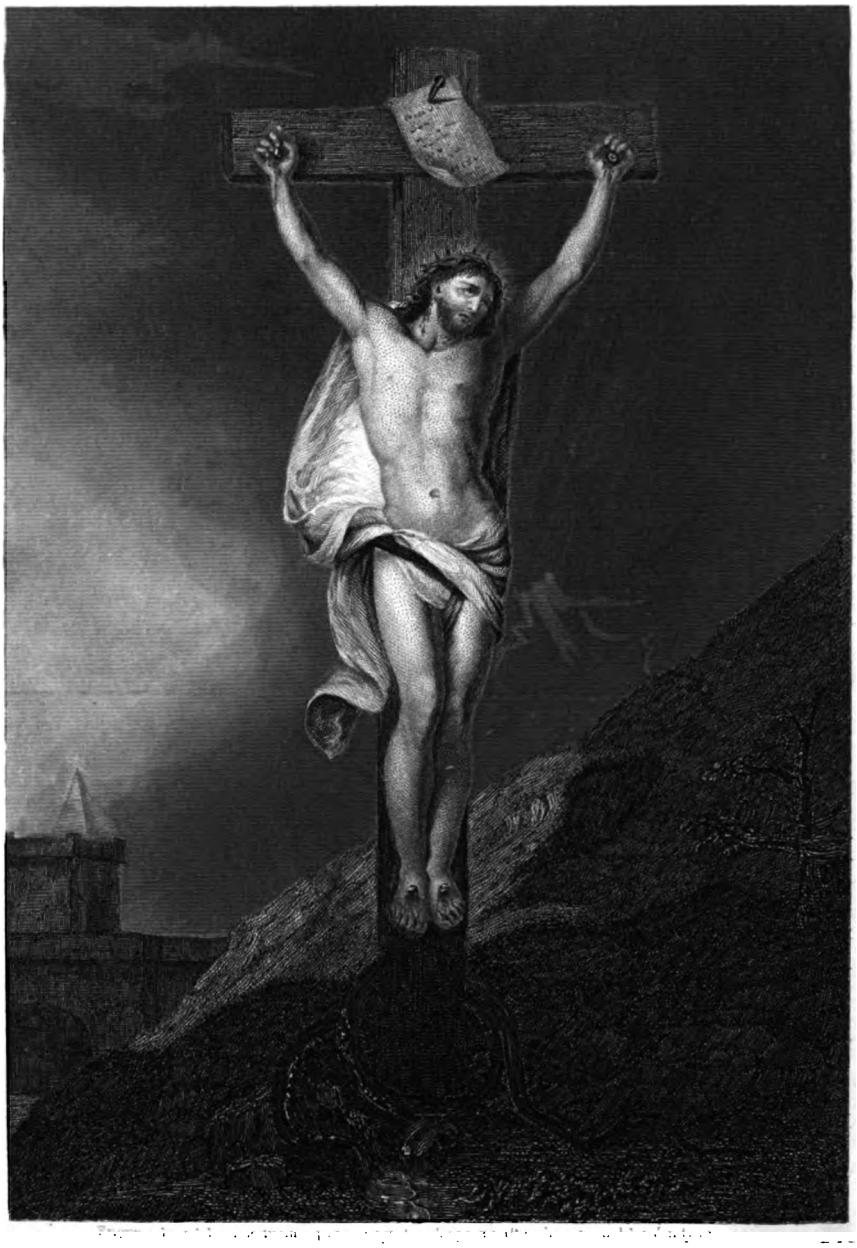
† Ex vestigiis filii mei cognoscebam incessum ejus; quo enim procedebat, apparebat terra infusa sanguinis. (St. Bridget, *Rev. Lib. IV. c.* lxxvii.)





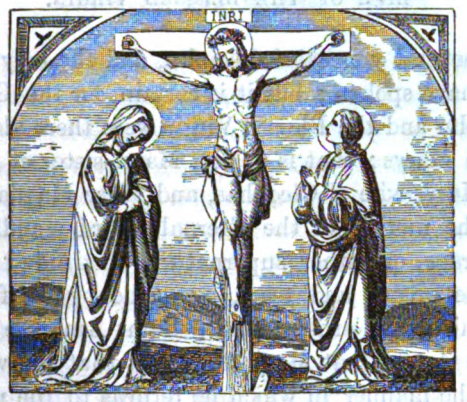
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THE CRUCIFIXION.

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CHAPTER V.

JESUS GIVES MARY TO JOHN, AS HIS MOTHER.



NAILED on the tree of the Cross between two thieves, on the summit of Golgotha, the Divine Redeemer was on the point of expiring. An immense multitude covered the mountain on which was to be consummated the greatest of crimes, the murder of the Man God. All the spectators were not, however, animated with the same sentiments. Some came to sate their eyes with the sufferings of a seducer who expiated his imposture. Others, led by a natural sentiment of curiosity, wished to see the last moments of a man put to death with such fury by the populace. Others, finally, were there, because in that dying man they beheld the Messias, who, by giving all his blood and resigning his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, paid the price of man's redemption. Among these last were

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doubtless several concealed disciples, and the holy women of whom we have spoken; but it is certain, for the Gospel says so, that John and the Blessed Virgin were there also, with the other three Marys; that is to say, Mary, sister of the mother of Jesus, Mary, wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

Was the mother of the Eternal Word standing, full of heroic courage, or rather supernatural fortitude; or did she give way to groans and tears, overcome by the force of nature? This question is mooted. Saint Ambrose says: "I read in the Gospel that Mary stood, not that she wept." †

From the manner in which he returns to the point, some have imagined that Mary did not burst forth into sobs and shed tears, and was thus deprived of that great consolation of grief; ‡ for experience teaches us that the pain is more intense when it is repressed and silent,§ and has not even the consolation of tears; hence some imagine that they exalt Mary's virtue the more, by representing her at the foot of the cross, stoically firm in the deepest grief. For our part, we believe that humble submission to God's will is perfectly reconcilable with anguish of soul and rending of the heart,

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* "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." (St. John xix. 25.)

† Stantem lego, flentem non lego. (*In consol. de obit. Valentiniani.*) Stabat juxta crucem Mater, et fugientibus viris stabat intrepida . . . Spectabat piis oculis filii vulnera, per quem sciebat omnibus futuram redemptionem. (*De Justit. Virg.* cap. vii.) Thiers, cited by Benedict XIV. (*De festis*), maintains in his treatise on superstitions, that it is wrong to teach that Mary wept.

‡ Diluitur lacrymis egeriturque dolor.
OVID.

§ I wept not: so all stone I felt within,
They wept: and one, my little Anselm, cried,
Thou lookest so! Father, what ails thee? Yet
I shed no tear, nor answered all that day,
Nor the next night, until another sun
Came out upon the world.
DANTE'S INFIERNO, XXXIII. 47. (CARY'S *translation.*)

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and that tears do not exclude real fortitude; for this reason, we think, with the best critics, that the Blessed Virgin wept, and that her tears, so natural, especially in women, were a remedy to her mortal grief; just as a few drops of oil, poured from time to time into a lamp, keep alive a light that would otherwise soon extinguish for want of nutriment.

We shall not describe all the outrages and insults that Mary beheld the mob heap on the head of her divine Son, as she herself relates to Saint Bridget;* we will only say that the Blessed Virgin, as Saint Antoninus teaches,† stood by the cross,‡ humble, with a face bathed in tears, and plunged into an abyss of bitter grief.

Ah, she was not near the cross, she was nailed to it,§ for she experienced in her heart all the sufferings that her divine Son endured in soul and in every part of his body;‖ so that in that tabernacle of pain, says Arnold, abbot of Bonneval, you might have seen two altars, one in the heart of Mary, the other in the body of Jesus; the sword that pierced the son's flesh, pierced also the mother's soul.¶ All the cruelties

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* In tempore illo audivi alios dicentes quod filius meus latro, aliosque quod mendax, alios quod nullus dignior esset morte quam filius meus, ex quorum auditu dolor meus renovabatur. (Saint Bridget, *Revel.* lx.)

† In *Sum.* part 4. lib. 15. c. 41.

‡ Adrichomius (n. 253) says that the Blessed Virgin and her holy companions stood about fifteen palms from the cross; in consequence of the circle formed by the soldiers, within which none but the executioners entered. It is probable, therefore, that the three Marys and John stood facing the cross, and not at the foot of it, as painters usually represent.

§ O Domina mea! ubi stabas? Numquid tantum juxta crucem? Imo in cruce cum Filio cruciaris; ibi enim crucifixa es secum; hoc solum restat quod ipse in corpore, tu vero in corde es passa; nec non singula vulnera per corpus ejus dispersa in tuo corde generaliter sunt unita, quia nempe tuam ipsius animam doloris gladius pertransivit. (Saint Bonaventure, *Stim. Amoris*, I. c. iii.)

‖ Ven. Bellarmine. De septem verbis Domini, § 3.

¶ Guerric, the abbot, and disciple of Saint Bernard, uses language similar to that of the abbot of Bonneval. "Plane juxta crucem Jesu Maria stabat, cujus

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wreaked on the bodies of the martyrs, are nothing compared to the interior sufferings of our holy heroine.* By the tears which flowed in abundance from Mary's eyes, the pallor of her countenance and her groans † did not render her less beautiful or less suffering in the eyes of God.‡ The Church in all her supplications to the Mother of Sorrows, invokes her in pathetic hymns, which represent her moaning, desolate, and with eyes bathed in tears, beside the cross of her divine Son.

The chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the guards who were stationed on Golgotha to watch this bloody sacrifice, might, to render it still more cruel, have driven from the mount the faithful souls that, tender and recollected, stood by

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mentem dolor simul crucis crucifigebat, suamque ipsius animam tuam multiplex pertransibat gladius, quantis confossum corpus filii cernebat vulneribus. (*Serm. quart. de Assumpt.*)

* Quidquid crudelitatis inflictum est corporibus martyrum leve fuit, aut potius nihil comparatione tuæ passionis. (Saint Anselm, *De Excell. Virg.*)

† Facies ejus (Virginis) omnino lacrymis erat perfusa, prorsus pallida, et tanquam mortua, vox fracta, oculi turbati, fusi in lacrymis. (John Gerson, t. III.)

‡ "Stabat Mater dolorosa,
Juxta Crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat filius, &c."

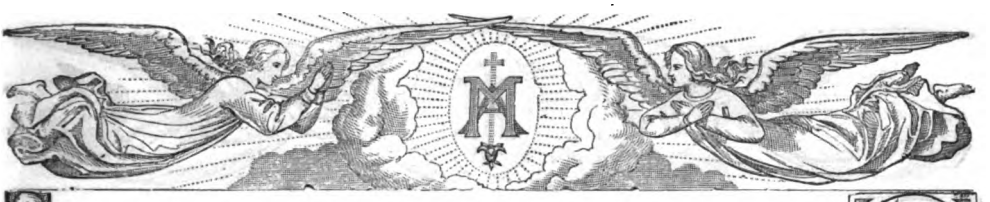
"At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last."

This prose was composed, it is said, by the Blessed Jacopone di Todi; it is probable that many others were chanted in the fourteenth century, when modern poetry began. Among other hymns may be mentioned that written by Saint Bernard, beginning:

Salve, mundi salutare,
Salve, Salve, Jesu care;
Cruci me aptare
Vellem vere, tu scis quare;
Da mihi tui copiam.

Ac si præsens sis, accedo,
Imo te præsentem credo.
O quam mundum hic te cerno!
Ecce tibi me prosterno;
Sis facilis ad veniam, &c., &c.

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Jesus in his bloody passion, and thus deprive him of so sweet a consolation. But they did not, either not to interfere with the common usage among the Jews of accompanying and standing by the condemned, or because the death of this Just One more than any other permitted it.

Mary is said to have stood on the right side of the cross, and fixed an eye of compassion on the body of her Son,* on his wounds, streaming with blood, the price of our redemption; on the left stood Saint John, meditating on the sufferings of his expiring Master. As Jesus saw that the time had come for him to speak to these persons so dear to him, he cast a sweet look on each;† the eyes of the Divine Redeemer met those of Mary and John; and Jesus said to his Mother: "Woman,‡ behold thy son;" and to John: "Behold thy mother."

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* Saint Ambrose (*Lib. X. in Luc.*), Saint Bonaventure (*Life of Christ*), Cornelius a Lapide (*in Matth.*), and others, think that Jesus was crucified entirely naked. Others believe not, and they add, that the Blessed Virgin covered him with her veil, which, according to the Jewish custom, was very long, and might envelope the whole body. St. Bridget in her Revelations (Bk. I. c x., and Bk. IV. c. lxx.) says that some one ran up with a veil. "Unus tunc accurrens apportavit sibi velamen." So too Saint Chrysologus teaches (*Lib. X. Hom. XXI.*): "Although Christ was entirely stripped by the soldiers, a charitable hand furnished a cloth to maintain decency; this St. Anselm thinks so true, that he does not hesitate to say, that the Blessed Virgin took the veil off her own head for the purpose."

† Saint Bridget (*Rev. Lib. IV.* c. lxx.) describes how Jesus gazed upon his Blessed Mother: "So drenched was my Son in blood, that he could not even behold me standing by his cross, except by closing his eyelids to expel for a moment the thick coming blood."

‡ Jesus called Mary *woman* and not *mother*, for the reason which we have already assigned in the first chapter of the third book, and also not to excite her grief, by pronouncing a name that would awaken her love for her divine Son. Sister Anne Catharine Emmerich, an Augustinian nun, makes a beautiful reflection on this, in the Revelations made to her on the Passion of Our Lord. This servant of God, who died in the odor of sanctity in 1824, says, that Jesus does not call her mother, but woman, because she was *the woman* who was to crush the head of the infernal serpent, a fact accomplished in the death of Jesus Christ.



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Brief and laconic as are these words, they are full of doctrine and mysteries. In them, according to the Fathers, we behold first, the solicitude of Jesus for his blessed Mother. When Jesus was still an infant, Joseph took care of her; after Joseph's death, her Divine Jesus replaced him in guarding his holy mother, and now that he is about to ascend to heaven, he would not leave her without a support, a consolation, and a guardian. In this last act we see a solemn confirmation of the divine Maternity of the Virgin, from whose womb Jesus issued; and in it, too, we behold among other things a lesson given to children, for Jesus teaches them by his example always to take care of their parents.* Here too we find a reward given to the virginity of John, by which he deserved that his dying Redeemer should confide to him the Queen of Virgins, a reward of that noble constancy with which he alone of all the apostles, followed Christ to Calvary: in fine, we find there the union of all the virtues that constitute a good son. As Saint Cyril observes,† the Redeemer in the same words recommends John to his mother and his mother to John. Now this identity in the form of language,

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* Moralis igitur insinuatur locus, et exemplo suo instruit præceptor bonus, ut a filiis piis impendatur cura parentibus; ita ut lignum illud, ubi erant fixa membra morientis, etiam cathedra fuerit magistri docentis. (St. Augustine.) "A moral duty is implied, and our good Master teaches by his example, that good children should take care of their parents; so that that tree, on which the limbs of the dying were fixed, became too the chair of the master teaching."

† Commendavit discipulo ut officia filii in eam observaret, matrem similiter admonuit ut parentis in discipulum auctoritatem haberet: amore videlicet et charitate non minus conjungi voluit, quam si natura maxima propinquitate conjuncti essent. (Saint Cyril.) "He commended her to his disciple, that he might render her the duty of a son, at the same time he admonished his mother to exercise over the disciple the rights of a mother; wishing them to be no less closely bound in love and charity, than if by nature they were united in the closest ties of blood."

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supposes an identity of duty ; Mary was to find in John a filial zeal, and John in Mary a maternal solicitude. Nothing better could be given to John than Mary, who had been chosen to be the mother of God ; and nothing could be given to Mary better than John, "the disciple that Jesus loved." Could the Messias expiring on the cross leave a richer, more precious legacy ? O blessed John, to whom Mary is given as a mother ! I believe that the beloved disciple then overcoming every obstacle, pressed to the foot of the cross to cover it with kisses of affection, and thank his divine Master for bequeathing to him as a mother, the mother of the Incarnate Word, while Mary, beholding her divine Son expire on the cross, meditated in her soul the secret mystery of the words he uttered.

In fact, John could not have on earth a greater or more enviable happiness than to be given as a son to Mary. But it was not so with the Blessed Virgin ; for she beheld a stranger substituted for the fruit of her chaste womb, the disciple substituted for his master, the sinner for the sinless, a man for God. "Ah," exclaims Saint Bernard, "if we ourselves, with our flinty hearts, cannot think of that exchange without experiencing profound grief, what must not have been the grief of the Mother of God !" *

What doubtless alleviated this bitterness, was Mary's knowledge of John's admirable virtues, and that by this divine testament † she was given as a mother to all Chris-

* Quomodo non tuam affectuosissimam animam pertransivit hæc auditio, quando nostra, licet saxea, licet ferrea pectora, sola recordatio scindit. (*Serm. XII. de Stell.*) "How these words pierced thy most loving heart ! when our hearts of stone, nay of iron, are rent at the very recollection."

† Testabatur de cruce Christus et testamentum . . . signabat Joannes, dignus tanto testatore testis. (Saint Ambrose, *in Luc. XXIII.*) "Christ made his testament on the cross, and John, worthy witness of such a testator, signed the testament."

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tians. For, as Saint Bernard well observes,* *John* is a proper name, but *disciple* is a common name, and hence he shows that Mary is given as a mother to all the faithful. Indeed the words of Scripture, as we know, have several significations. Besides the literal and historical sense, there is the spiritual sense, that is the sense which results from the spirit of things. Saint Augustine tells us clearly that we must understand in a spiritual sense all that Christ wrought corporally.† By this testament of the Divine Redeemer we are assimilated to Saint John, and the only difference between his adoption and ours, is that John was the occasional, proximate, immediate object of filiation; and that we are the final, mediate and remote object. "The one is the figure and the prophecy," says Father Joachim Ventura;‡ the other the prefigured, the term, the complement. In the former sense, Jesus acted as the real son of Mary and master of Saint John, and as such he wished to console his mother and reward his disciple. In the latter sense, he acted as the real Redeemer and Saviour of men, and as such he wished to give them Mary as a refuge and aid in the way of salvation; and as in the person of Christ one quality does not exclude another, so in his words one sense does not exclude the other. Our adoption is then as real as John's, and the words of Jesus contain alike the mystery and solemn act of our adoption."

Thus did our merciful Redeemer accomplish in another

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* "Joannes est nomen particulare; discipulus commune, ut denotetur quod Maria omnibus datur in matrem." (*Tom. I. Serm.* lv.) The Fathers indeed style John the representative, the personification of all mankind.

† Dominus noster Jesus Christus, quæ faciebat corporaliter, etiam spiritualiter volebat intelligi. (*Serm.* xliv. *etc. Verbis Domini.*)

‡ *Mother of God, Mother of men, or an explanation of the mystery of the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the cross.* (Pt. I. ch. v.)

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sense the promise which he had made not to leave us orphans,* since he not only made us his adoptive children, but became our brother, and at the moment of his death gave us as a mother Her, who, according to the expression of St. Ephrem, is the asylum of orphans, *susceptrix orphanorum.* O what pains this maternity cost the Blessed Virgin! We have already in part recounted them: what remain for us to see are still greater. Saint John Damascenus,† and with him most of the Fathers, teach that she suffered pains that she did not experience in bringing forth her divine Son. Saint Bridget says,‡ that when our Redeemer pronounced these words, spoken in some respects to console her, she was seized with trembling and nearly swooned, so that Saint John and the holy women ran up to support her.

If the aged Tobias,§ seeing himself on the verge of the grave, charged his son, as Ecclesiasticus ‖ does, not to forget his mother and all that she had endured in bringing him into the world, how can we forget Mary, we whom she bore on Calvary, at the foot of the cross, amid sighs and tears? Let us often think of the pains of that mystic childbirth, and increase the ever too small number ¶ of those who remember

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* "I will not leave you orphans." (John xiv. 18.)

† Quia dolores quos effugit parturiendo, sustinuit in cruce compatiendo. (*Lib. IV. c.* xv. *de Fide Orthodox.*)

‡ Vidi tunc ejus matrem mœstissimam, quasi trementem et semimortuam, quam consolabantur Joannes et alii, sorores ejus quæ tunc stabant non longe a cruce ad partem dexteram. (*Rev.* Lib. VII. c. xv.)

§ Tobias iv. 4.

‖ Forget not the groanings of thy mother. (Ecclesiasticus vii. 29.)

¶ Respicio ad omnes qui in mundo sunt, si forte sint aliqui qui compatientur mihi, et recogitent dolorem meum, et valde paucos invenio. Ideo, filia mea, tu tamen non obliviscaris mei, vide dolorem meum. (Saint Bridget, Lib. ii. c. xxxiv.) I look to all in the world, to find some to sympathize with me, and consider my sorrow, and I find but few. My daughter, do not thou forget me, see my anguish!

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her sufferings and can sympathize in them. O how happy we shall be under the protection of so loving a mother! * Who will venture to wrest us from her bosom? What temptation, what trouble will ever be able to overcome us, if we confidently put ourselves under her powerful patronage? O happy confidence! O assured refuge! The mother of God is also our mother, exclaims Saint Anselm: † with what certainty should we not hope, when salvation depends on the will of a good brother and a loving mother? Let us rejoice, then, at the incomparable honor which the divine Mercy has done us; let us thank God for a benefit, such as the greatest audacity and temerity could never conceive, much less hope. With Saint Germanus, let us turn our hearts to Mary, and say to our dear Lady, our august Mother: "O our Queen, sole comfort after God, guide of our way, staff of our weakness, treasure of our poverty, balsam of our wounds, solace in our pain, hope of our salvation, hear our words, take pity on us, O our Sovereign, our life, our support, our hope, our strength." ‡

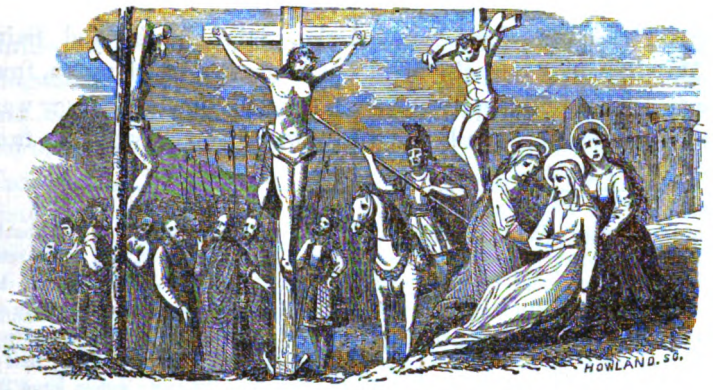
* Quam bene nobis erit sub præsidio tantæ matris! Quis detrahere audebit de sinu ejus? Quæ nos tentatio aut turbatio superare poterit confidentes in patrocinio matris Dei et nostræ? (BELLARMINE.)

† O beata fiducia, O totum refugium. Mater Dei est mater mea! qua certitudine igitur debemus sperare quoniam salus de boni fratris et piæ matris arbitrio. (*In deprec. ad Deiparam.*)

‡ *In Encom. Deip.*



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CHAPTER VI.

MARY AT THE DEATH OF HER SON—SHE BEHOLDS HIS SIDE PIERCED WITH A LANCE.

THICK darkness* had covered the earth at the moment when the Man God, prefigured by the brazen serpent, was elevated on the cross. Thus did senseless, material things presage the coming death of their Creator.

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* This eclipse was miraculous, because, contrary to the ordinary laws of nature, the full moon came between the earth and the sun, and remained in conjunction for three hours. Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, who was an eye-witness of this eclipse, thus describes it: "We were both standing at Heliopolis, looking, when unexpectedly the moon came before the sun; nor was it the time of the conjunction, and yet there it remained on the sun's disk from the ninth hour to evening.' (*Epist. 7. ad Polyc.*) Moved at so strange a sight, the Areopagite exclaimed, "Either the God of nature suffers, or the fabric of the universe totters." Cornelius a Lapide adds (*Comment. in Matt.* xxvii. 23), on the authority of the ancient historians, that the Athenians, by the advice of Dionysius, raised an altar to the UNKNOWN GOD, from which Saint Paul took his text to preach Christ.

Some commentators have said that this darkness was as dense as that of Egypt,

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The Evangelists, Saint Luke, Saint Mark, and Saint Matthew, say that the friends of Jesus stood looking on, from afar off, what transpired on the mountain,* and that there were present some of the holy women who had followed him from

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so that people could not recognize each other. This does not seem to us probable; for then the inscription on the cross could not have been read, and many other facts which took place on Calvary would be inexplicable. We rather believe, that the sun was darkened as usual in total eclipse, in which there always remains a twilight. It is true that Origen (*Tr. 35. in Matt.*) relates that Phlegonthes, a freedman of the Emperor Adrian, an exact chronologist, stated in his writings, that on that occasion the stars were seen in the heavens. "Quarto autem anno 202 Olympiadis defectio solis est facta; dies hora sexta, ita in tenebrosam noctem versus ut stellæ in cœlo visæ sunt." And though Origen himself, with Lyranus and Maldonado (Matt. xxvii.) think that this darkness covered only Judea, yet it is the general opinion of the Fathers, that it spread over the whole earth. Eusebius (*Bk.* ix. c. vi.) and Tertullian (*Apolog.* c. xxi.) say that the Romans inscribed this phenomenon in their annals as an extraordinary thing, and the testimony of Dionysius the Areopagite confirms it; for how could he have seen the eclipse at Heliopolis, if it had not been universal?

* St. Mark says that it was the third hour of the day when our Lord was crucified (xv. 25), and Saint John that it was on the Parasceve, about the sixth hour, when Pilate said to the Jews: "Behold your king." (xix. 14.) There is an apparent contradiction between the accounts of the two Evangelists, but all doubt will disappear, when we reflect that the Jews divided the day as well as the night into twelve hours; now it follows that the hours varied in length according to the season. The night was divided into four equal parts, called the first, second, third, and fourth watches; and the day was also divided into four equal parts, called *Prime*, which began at sunrise, Tierce, Sext, and None. Sext always began at noon, and Tierce lasted till then. Now it was common in writing and in conversation to count indifferently by these divisions of the day, or by the hours. Saint John in his Gospel has counted by the hours. In chap. i. v. 39, he speaks of the tenth hour. Saint Mark, on the contrary, uses the divisions of the day. The former then by saying: "about the sixth hour," means actually the sixth hour from sunrise; the latter, on the other hand, adopts the divisions, saying: "it was the third hour," meaning the division Tierce, and it was about the end of that division, that is to say a few moments before mid-day or Sext. Moreover, the period which elapsed between the hour indicated by one Evangelist and that indicated by the other, was more than the Jews required to go from the pretorium to Calvary. Other explanations are also given. We shall here cite Saint Thomas (3 pt. q. 46.

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Galilee to Jerusalem; naming among these women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Yet we are not told that the Mother of our Saviour was among them. The Fathers and Doctors hold for certain that Mary did not leave that mountain of sorrow, and that she remained with John near the cross. The latter relates, as an eye-witness, that one of the soldiers opened the side of Jesus with a spear. We shall not endeavor to recount Mary's affliction, for it is not given to the mind of man to fathom such grief, nor to the lips of man to unfold it. He who sails upon the ocean, thinks he is always reaching the land, and the land seems to be ever flying from him, so immense is the sea: even so he who would speak of Mary's sorrow, when he thinks that he has said all that is possible, finds that he has still endless things to say. Every instant of Jesus' agony brings new pain to Mary, because at every instant she sees in her divine Son suffering added to suffering, and all that he suffers is cruelly reflected in the heart of his most blessed mother, like the rays of the sun in the ripple of a gentle stream. Who, indeed, can describe all that our august Queen suffered, when she heard him in that fearful agony complain: "My God, my God,

art. 9. ad. 2), who following Saint Augustine, says: "Quanquam non desunt qui per Parasceven, quam Joannes commemorat dicens: *erat Parasceve*, horam diei sextam velint intelligi. Parasceve quippe interpretatur præparatio. Verum autem Pascha, quod in Passione Domini celebratur, iucepit præparari ab hora noctis nona, quando scilicet omnes principes sacerdotum dixerunt: *Reus est mortis.* Ab illa ergo noctis hora usque ad Christi crucifixionem occurrit hora Parasceve sexta secundum Joannem, et hora diei tertia secundum Marcum."—Some by the word Parasceve used by John, would understand the sixth hour of the day, for Parasceve means preparation: but the Pasch celebrated in the Passion of Our Lord, began its preparation at the ninth hour of the night, when the chief priests all said: "He is guilty of death." From that hour of the night till the Crucifixion of Christ, was the sixth hour of the Parasceve, according to John, and the third hour of the day, according to Mark.

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why hast thou forsaken me?" * when she heard him plead in vain for a few drops of water to quench his burning thirst, and finally, as he gave up his soul into the hands of his Father, utter that loud cry which revealed a God? What indeed signified that mighty word uttered by Christ at that supreme moment, but that he remained as God, full of strength and life, or that he died voluntarily at the moment when he chose to die?

Scarcely had our Redeemer uttered from his cross this last word, messenger of glory for him and his people,† than the earth responded to the signs of grief which the heavens had displayed three hours before. A fearful earthquake shook it so, that it seemed torn from its very base; the hardest rock flew in fragments; the graves opened, and many bodies of the saints arose. All announced the death of the Man God, and heaven and earth shudderingly united their bitter reproach. O prodigy! the veil of the temple was rent asunder. This was the veil which divided from the accessible

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* Saint Bridget thus speaks of Mary's grief at these words of Jesus, words which she could never forget: "Words, that till I entered heaven, I could never forget, because he uttered them moved more by my pain than his own. Then the pallor of death overspread such parts as could be seen through the streams of blood; his cheeks closed on his jaws, his ribs could be numbered: his wasted body collapsed, his nostrils pinched, his heart was breaking, his whole frame quivered."

† Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews (v. 7), speaking of the prayer of Christ, says: "Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence." Now this text shows clearly that Jesus Christ, as priest offering the victim, prayed God to render him a glorious life, and not leave him in the power of death (Ps. xv.), as in fact came to pass. How else could it be said that "God was able to save him from death, and that he was heard for his reverence?" that is for his profound submission; or, as others explain it, not so much as a favor, but from his merit, because the Father beheld in the oblation of the Son an infinite dignity, and an immense price which nothing could equal.

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part the Holy of Holies, in which none but the high priest could enter, and he only once a year. *

This prodigy, according to the common opinion of the Doctors, announced that the sacraments, previously shown to men only under the veil of symbol, were about to be shown to them really; or as other interpreters of the Sacred Scriptures say, that heaven, of which that holy place, till then closed to men, was a figure, was at last opened to all by the death of Jesus and the infinite merit of his blood.

The effect of this divine sacrifice was seen at once, for the Centurion † who commanded the soldiers, and stood opposite the cross, hearing that loud cry, and feeling the earth quake beneath his feet, could not refrain from acknowledging and glorifying in that Crucified One, the Just, the Son of God. The noble example was followed by the other guards, who, seized with respectful awe, also exclaimed: "Truly he was the Son of God." Nor did the soldiers alone proclaim the divinity of Jesus Christ; the whole crowd gathered on Calvary did so, moved at what they had seen: they went away striking their breasts.‡ Thus the spot which had just witnessed so many blasphemies, outrages, and cruelties to the

* There are many opinions as to this veil, which was before the Holy of Holies; Origen (*Tr.* 36. *in Matth.*) and Saint Jerome (*Ep.* 150.) say that it covered the tabernacle. Saint Leo (*Serm. X. de Pass.*), Saint Cyril, Anthymus, and Lyranus (in Matt. xxvii.) with many modern authors, say that it veiled only the part accessible only to the high priest. Others believe that it was rent by the archangel that guarded it. (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom.* lxix. *in Joan.*)

† Some say that the Centurion was Caius Oppius, a Spaniard. The most received opinion is that his name was Longinus, a native of Rome, or of Anatolia, who, afterwards baptized by the Apostle, was through the efforts of the Jews put to death either in Cappadocia or Syria. The conversion of the soldiers and of the crowd was doubtless due to Christ's prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

‡ And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts. (Luke xxiii. 48.)

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Messias, became in a moment the scene of sighs, tears, and profound repentance, if not of all, at least of a great part of the people, who acknowledged the crime which Jerusalem had committed.

The death of Christ having taken place on the *Parasceve*, that is to say, on the *Preparation of the Sabbath*, the Jews, who observed the Mosaic law rather according to the letter than the spirit, instead of being convinced by the manifestation of so many prodigies, by the voices that proclaimed the divinity of the Crucified One, resolved that according to the law* (unless they were impelled by a more cruel design †), the bodies should not remain on the crosses, that the solemnity of so great a day might not be sullied by the bloody spectacle. Hence they went to Pilate, and asked him to break the legs of the crucified according to the custom, and then to take them down from the crosses. Pilate consented. And upon this the furious soldiers again returned to Calvary, to execute with cruelty the order which they had themselves solicited; but seeing that Jesus was dead, they refrained from breaking his legs, thus verifying to the letter the law given in Exodus ‡ and Numbers,§ as to the paschal lamb, a figure of Christ: "Neither shall you break a bone thereof;" a law, of which the interpreters do not give a harmonious explanation.

* In Deuteronomy xxi. 22, it reads thus: "When a man hath committed a crime for which he is to be punished with death, and being condemned to die, is hanged on a gibbet, his body shall not remain upon the tree, but shall be buried the same day, for he is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree, and thou shalt not defile thy land."

† Cornelius a Lapide (*in Joan.* xix.) says, that it is probable the Jews, especially in hatred of Christ, and to martyrize him more, asked that the legs of the crucified should be broken; and Baronius believes that they gave Jesus vinegar to drink, in order to prolong his life and torture.

‡ Exodus xii. 46. § Numbers ix. 12.

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One of the soldiers * (not perhaps with the view of committing a cruel outrage, but to see whether Jesus was dead, or because, as some think, Pilate had ordered the soldiers not to break the legs of the Nazarene, in compliance with the request of the Jews,† but to finish him *nobly* if he was still alive), one of the soldiers took his spear and plunged it into the side of Christ so violently, that he seemed to pierce him through and through.‡ This savage thrust opened in the right side a wound, as Malaneo § tells us, as wide as a hand.

This opinion obtains an apparently evident confirmation from the words of Thomas,‖ and those of Our Lord¶ to that

* Some believe this soldier to be the same Longinus as the Centurion of whom we have spoken. Cornelius a Lapide shows the improbability of this, by saying that Longinus having just before acknowledged the divinity of Christ, would not have dared to commit such an action; at least would not have committed it with a violence betraying anger, as it was revealed to St. Bridget, he did. Finally, if it was the same Centurion, the Evangelist would have given him the title, and not said simply "one of the soldiers." It is probable, however, as the same commentator thinks, that his name may have been Longinus, which led to his being confounded with the Centurion. This soldier is said to have been one-eyed, and to have gained by a drop of the precious blood corporal and spiritual sight. The Church honors him as a Saint.

† This opinion is given by Christian Druthamar (in Matt. xxvii.), and by John Gregory (*in Calvar. Lext.* 62). We cannot say how far it will stand the test of criticism.

‡ "Thou must think, my daughter, that my son was struck so bitterly and so mercilessly in the heart, that the lance did not stop till it touched the opposite side, and both parts of the heart were on the lance." (St. Bridget. *Rev.* Lib. II. c. xxi.) In the 15th chapter of the seventh book she adds: "And so fierce did he drive the spear into his right side, that the spear almost pierced the opposite side of his body, and when it was drawn out, at once there gushed violently out a perfect river of blood; the iron head and part of the handle of the spear coming from the body all red and stained with blood.

§ *De Vulnere lateris*, c. xx.

‖ Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. (John xxv. 25.)

¶ "Put in thy finger hither and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." (John xx. 27.)

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disciple, when, to convince the latter of his glorious resurrection, Jesus bade him in the presence of all the other disciples put his hand in his side: which dispenses us from citing other proofs, such as the length of the lance.* But that was the time of miracles and graces, and a new prodigy was added to the many wrought on that eventful day, for from the wound issued immediately blood and water. If real blood and water flowed from the divine side of Jesus, as Pope Innocent has defined and as Suarez proves,† this was surely a miracle; for live and smoking blood, great as may be a wound, cannot flow naturally from a body that has lost all its vital heat. Moreover, were not our Divine Redeemer's veins exhausted by the wounds which he had already received before his death? How then could blood flow from them in abundance? How could that water gush from that sacred breast?

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* If we are to believe Andrew, Bishop of Crete, who flourished in the seventh century, the sacred spear was found by the Empress Saint Helena, at the same time and in the same place as the cross and nails. The Venerable Bede (*de Loc. Sanc*), says: "Lancea militis inserta habetur in cruce lignea in portica martyrii, cujus hastile in duas intercisum partes a tota veneratur civitate."—"The soldier's lance is kept fixed in a wooden cross in the portico of the martyrdom (that is in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), and the staff, now divided in two, is venerated by the whole city." In the year 1092 the iron point was found again in the temple of Antioch, the Apostle Saint Andrew having revealed it to a priest of Marseilles. From Antioch it was transferred to Jerusalem, and thence to Constantinople when Godfrey de Bouillon took that city. The Emperor Baldwin II. being in want of money, pledged it with the sponge to the Venetians; but the holy king of France, Louis IX., redeemed both relics. The staff of the lance was preserved at Constantinople, in the Church of St. John. Mahomet II., on taking that city in 1453, ordered this relic to be preserved in the imperial treasury, with the other relics of the Church; his son Bajazet, in 1492, sent an ambassador to offer it to Pope Innocent VIII., and that Pontiff placed it in the Vatican Basilica. That church still has the honor of possessing it among its most remarkable relics, and on certain days, presents it to the veneration of the Sovereign Pontiff, and people. (BARONIUS.)

† Tom. II. 3. p. disp. 41. Sect. 1.

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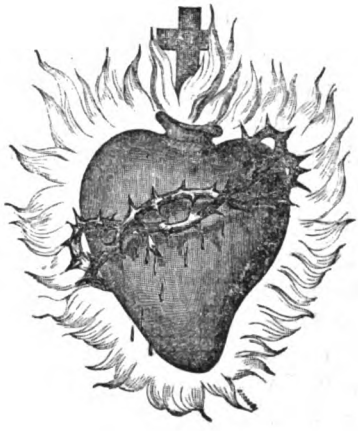
There is then a great mystery in this miracle, whether with Saint Augustine * we behold in the abundance of the blood and water the symbol of the sacraments, which in his mercy Christ has left his church; or with Saint Jerome,† we behold in the water the figure of baptism and in the blood martyrdom; or finally, as the Seraphic Doctor believes,‡ the vision of God was symbolized in the mysterious opening of the divine side, since the vision of God is the consummation of grace and the last fruit of beatitude promised by Jesus to the church his spouse. Before continuing these considerations, which fill the heart of a Christian with great consolation, when he thinks of the immense love of Christ for man, we cannot refrain from casting a pious look on the Blessed Virgin, and thinking how much she must have suffered in that last act. For here the pain was entirely hers. The other sufferings which our divine Lord endured were all, as we have said, reflected in the heart of Mary, since her divine Son, already dead, could no longer suffer. Jesus then received the blow, but Mary the pain. The lance struck the lifeless body of Jesus Christ, but Mary's living heart felt it. The spear that opened the side of the Son, opened the Mother's heart, and opened it so cruelly, that many holy Fathers do not hesitate to affirm that this was the sword foretold by the aged Simeon. By this unspeakable pain Mary is above all martyrs; and if her consolation and joy flow from the example of Christ, from Christ too came the bitterness of her grief: for she had beheld in him her son and her God suffer infinitely; and as she herself revealed to Saint Bridget,§ it was a great miracle that she did not expire of grief, considering those impious men,

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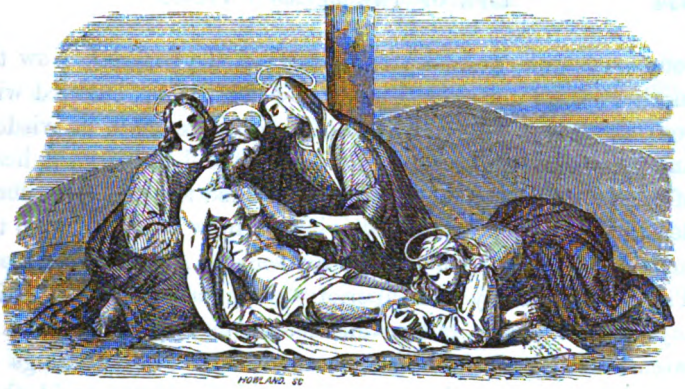
* *Tract.* 120 *in Joan.*
† *Epist.* 83.
‡ *In Stim. I.* c. xii.
§ *Revel.* c. x.

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who, not content with outraging, crucifying, and putting him to death, wreaked their fury, more cruel than tigers, on his lifeless corpse, repaying by the most insulting wickedness, the infinite charity of our Divine Redeemer.



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CHAPTER VII.

MARY WITNESSES THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS, AND FOLLOWS JESUS TO THE GRAVE.

NEVER did woman suffer so much or so constantly as she whose history we read in the second book of Machabees.* That intrepid mother beheld her seven sons, her love and hope, suffer before her very eyes, and expire slowly in the most cruel tomrents, for the observation of the mosaic law. The skin was torn from their heads, their hands and feet were cut off, their

* This woman whose death is chronicled in II. Machabees, chapter vii., is called the Mother of the Seven Machabees. It is believed that they received this name from having been put to death in the persecution, during which Judas, with his brethren, fought gloriously against the enemies of God and his people. They were martyred at Antioch, and their tombs were still shown in Saint Jerome's time at a spot where a church was subsequently erected in their honor, as Saint Augustine mentions. (*Serm. I. Machab.*) They were Judas, Jonathas, and Simeon, sons of Matathias, called Machabees? It is commonly believed that this name is formed of the initials of these words in Hebrew: "O Lord, who is like thee among the strong?"

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tongues cut off, and they expired amid the flames. Now the mother seeing her seven sons expire in one day, suffered with constancy, and exhorted each of her children, full of wisdom and fortitude, as the sacred text says,* and uniting the heart of a man to the love of a woman. At last the mother suffered death after her children, and, with her brow wreathed with the martyr's crown, went to meet her sons in Abraham's bosom. This extraordinary and superior woman, as Saint Augustine says, was not once but seven times a martyr, for she was as often a martyr as she had been a mother. The sufferings of her children, were her sufferings; their groans amid their torments, found an echo in her heart, and she felt all the pangs of death in each son in whom she saw life extinguish. And yet, can the grief of this heroic mother be compared to the grief of Mary? If the mother of the Machabees lost her seven sons, Mary felt her soul pierced by seven swords of steel, that is, by her seven chief dolors. These two mothers both remained intrepid at the death of their sons; but there is this difference between these two martyrdoms; one, indeed, in a few hours beheld her seven sons expire in torments; but Mary lost a son more precious than all sons, that is to say, a God. She beheld him expire on the cross, after a life devoted entirely to the welfare of men; and she beheld the impious Jews † accumulate on that divine head torment on torment and outrage on outrage.

* "Being filled with wisdom, and joining a man's heart to a woman's thought, she said to them: I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you; but the Creator of the world that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, he will restore to you again in his mercy both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of his laws." (II. Mach. vii. 21-23.)

† The Passion of Christ lasted about fifteen hours, that is to say from midnight on Thursday, when according to Saint John Chrysostom, and Saint Augustine, he was put in prison, till three o'clock on Friday afternoon, when he expired.

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We left Mary on Calvary, living only by a miracle, after the spear-thrust which struck Jesus after his death. The friends of the Mother of Sorrows, it might seem by force led her from that mount, and John, to whose care she had been confided, accompanied her to her abode. But it was not so, either because custom required parents to follow to the grave the mortal remains of their children,* or because Mary was to rise to the highest degree of fortitude and courage.

After the death of our Divine Redeemer, it was necessary to bury him promptly, on account of the solemn feast about beginning. Joseph of Arimathea, seeing Mary's anguish, was touched with pity, and took care of her. He was a very noble and rich man, to whom the Gospel gives the illustrious title of Decurion, which in the municipal cities corresponded to that of Senator at Rome; many also suppose him a member of the Sanhedrim.† A virtuous and just man, he had not consented to the plot of the rest, nor any thing that they had done, awaiting with other just men the Kingdom of God. He was a disciple of Jesus; but through weakness, fear of the Jews, or some other motive, he had not ventured to become an open follower of the Nazarene. Now, confirmed in the faith by the prodigies which he had witnessed, he resolved to go boldly to Pilate, and ask for the body of Jesus, that he might embalm it in the usual way, and then give it the honors of

* Saint Luke says: "And when he (Jesus) came nigh to the gates of the city, (of Naim), behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow; and a great multitude of the city was with her." This custom still prevails in many countries.

† Ludolph (p. II. c. lxv.), and Peter Comestor (*Hist. Evang.*) say, that Joseph had for five years discharged the duties of Counsellor at the Court of Pilate; and translate the word decurion by "Senator" or "Counsellor." Cornelius a Lapide. (*In Matt.* xxvii.) on the authority of Saint Anselm, relates that one of the reasons urged by him on the governor to obtain permission to bury Jesus, was the fear of seeing that loving mother die of grief for her divine Son.

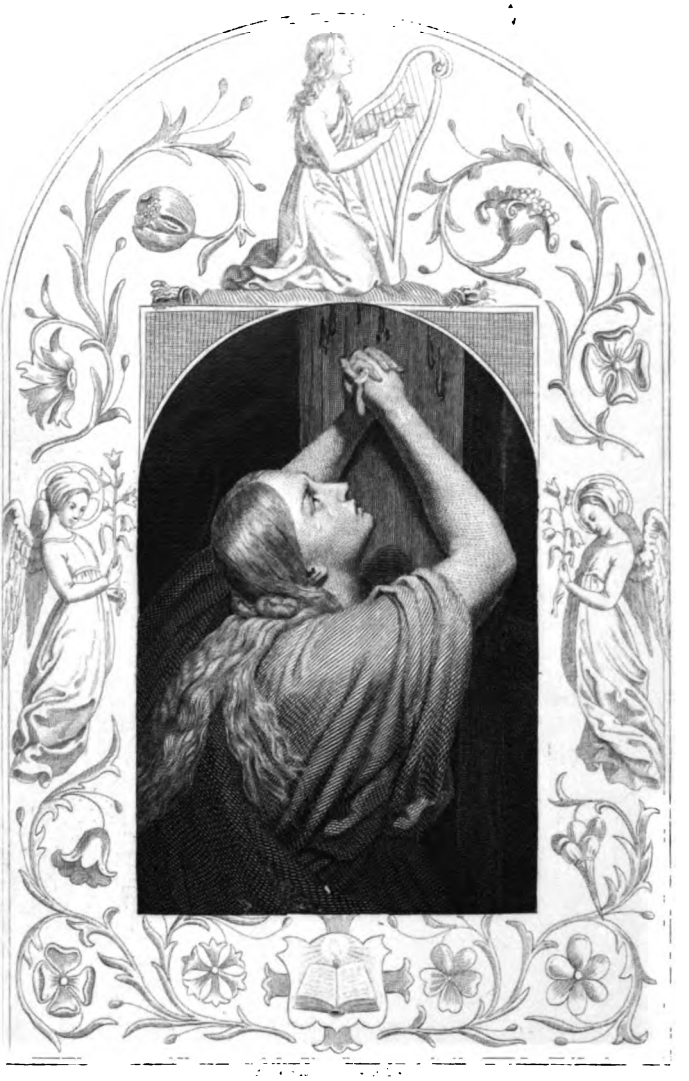
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burial. Surprised at the request, the Roman governor hesitated. According to Euthymius, he could not credit the death of Christ, who had declared himself the Man God, and wrought so many miracles; or rather, as Maldonado says, he feared that this disciple of Jesus wished by this pretext to deliver him from death; or finally, as is more probable, he thought that the King of the Jews had not been long enough on the cross; although he had been there nearly four hours. Still, fearing to disoblige so eminent a person, and at the same time wishing to be sure that Jesus was really dead, he called the centurion, the commander of the guard, and convinced, by his testimony, ordered the body of Jesus to be delivered up to Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph was not alone in paying this pious homage to the holy remains of our Divine Redeemer; for if Jesus had been crucified between two malefactors, he was not to be treated like them after death; but should, according to the custom of the great, receive the honors of burial. The same idea was in the mind of Nicodemus, a man of equal rank, one of the leading men at Jerusalem, who had once gone by night to Jesus to learn about him and his doctrine, and who had had a long interview with our Lord. We cannot say whether he accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to Pilate's house, or whether he met him on the way; but it is certain that he came to the mountain, bringing a mixture of about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to embalm the

* Saint John (iii. 1.) thus speaks of Nicodemus: "And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs, which thou dost, unless God be with him. Jesus answered, and said to him, Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith to him, How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again? Jesus answered, Amen, amen, I say to thee; unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

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MARY MAGDALEN.

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body of Jesus, Joseph having purchased a winding-sheet to wrap it in.

When Mary learned that permission had been obtained to bury the sacred body of Jesus, and that the necessary preparations had been made, she experienced a sweet consolation; for she thought that the divine remains would now be preserved from further outrage.* It was about the eighth hour when these pious disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, began to take down from the cross the body of their divine Master. The Blessed Virgin revealed to Saint Bridget that they used three ladders, one reaching to the feet, another to the armpits, and the third to the middle of the body. Joseph ascended first, and supported our Redeemer by the middle of the body; Nicodemus getting up on another ladder, drew out successively the nails which fastened the two hands, and passed through the wood. Joseph having then descended, gradually supporting the weight of the body, Nicodemus got up on the ladder, which touched the feet of Jesus, and drew out the nails from the feet.†

Meanwhile the desolate Mother, kneeling before the cross, kept embracing it, and covering it with kisses of love, thus venerating the drops of her divine Son's precious blood. Not only did she adore that blood and that cross, but she also

* Simon Metaphrastes says that for this reason the Blessed Virgin was very anxious to have him buried, and that she herself begged Joseph Arimathea to obtain permission from Pilate.

† Hi duo qui deponebant eum de cruce tres applicabant scalas: uno protendebatur ad pedes, secunda subtus ascellas, tertia ad medietatem corporis. Primus ascendit et tenebat eum permedium, secundus ascendens per aliam scalam excussit primum unum clavum de uno brachio; deinde applicata scala excussit clavum alterius manus; qui quidem clavi longe ultra stipitem crucis protendebantur. Descendente igitur illo, qui sustentabat onus corporis paulatim et modice prout poterat ille, alius ascendit in scalam quæ tendebantur ad pedes, et excussit clavos a pedibus. (*Rev. Lib. II.* c. xxi.)

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revered and kissed a thousand times all that had been used in the crucifixion of her divine Son. No sooner did she behold him detached from the cross, and laid upon the earth, while John supported the head, and Magdalen tenderly bedewed with her tears the right hand of her divine Master, Mary raised her eyes to heaven, thanking God for the complete victory won by Jesus over sin and the devil, and counting over our Saviour's sacred wounds, she watered them with her copious tears. She then closed the lips and eyelids of Jesus, and stretched at his side his icy, death-stiffened arms.* When Mary had indulged in these first transports of grief and love, Magdalen and the other holy women approached the mother of sorrows, to offer the tribute of their tears and piety to the Divine Redeemer.† John, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, all the disciples and faithful on the mountain, followed their example. Thus this spot was the scene of the holiest and most touching drama, and was occupied by pious souls rendering the last duties to their divine Master. The angels‡ beheld this mournful spectacle; as numerous as the atoms of dust that play in the sunbeam, they came to adore

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* Saint Bridget, repeating in part what she had already said in Book I. ch. x., says: "But now I was almost consoled, because I could touch his body descended from the cross, and receive him into my bosom, and view his wounds, and wipe away his blood. Then my hands closed his mouth and eyes; but I could not bend his stiffened arms over his breast, but lower down; nor could I straighten out his knees; they remained as they had stiffened on the cross." (*Rev. Bk. IV.* ch. lxx.)

‡ Some say that while John affectionately kissed the sacred body, Saint Peter repentant ran up. Saint Anselm thus depicts the scene: "Then John the Evangelist running up fell on his breast weeping, and said: Alas! alas! from this breast I imbibed sweets, now sad and mournful things. Then Peter came up, and began to weep bitterly that he had denied him."

‡ Afterwards Mary Magdalen and the other holy women came, and many holy angels, like motes in a sunbeam, showing reverence to their Creator. (St. Bridget, *Rev. Bk. II.* ch. xxi.)

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their Lord in his death, and to form the cortege and guard of his divine remains.

When all had given free scope to their tears and grief, they thought of interring Jesus ; and Mary doubtless felt her grief redouble at the thought that she would soon be deprived of that last consolation of beholding the lifeless body of her beloved son. Not far from the spot where Jesus was crucified, was a garden ; there Joseph of Arimathea had cut in the rock a sepulchre, in which no one had yet been laid.

At that time the Jews were not accustomed to bury the dead as we do ; but each one, according to his means, made a little grotto in the rock, laid the corpse on a stone slab, and closed the mouth of the grotto, ordinarily about four feet high. Either because the Sabbath was commencing,* or because Joseph of Arimathea wished it, or because a new sepulchre would better attest the resurrection, this sepulchre was chosen to deposit the sacred body of Jesus.

Joseph, Nicodemus, and Mary † herself bore it thither piously in procession, and rendered it the funeral honors usually paid to the most illustrious deceased. Hence, after washing the Saviour's body, they embalmed it with the mixture of myrrh ‡ and aloes brought by Nicodemus : they wrapped it

* Saint Luke (xxiii. 54) says, that when Our Lord was placed in the tomb "the Sabbath was drawing on." The solemnity of the Sabbath, it is known, began at sunset, and hence Our Lord having been buried on Friday afternoon, the Evangelist could say that the Sabbath was drawing on. We must not understand it of Saturday morning, for then Our Redeemer would not have been three days in the grave. Indeed we read in the Syriac version : *Erat parasceve, et sabbatum post illucescebat ;* in the Ethiopian : *Et parasceve tunc erat isto die ut illucesceret sabbatum ;* in the Arabic text : *Et erat dies parasceve, cujus mane erat sabbatum ;* and in the Persian : *Feria sexta erat et sabbatum inibat.* Moreover, we see clearly by this text and verse 41, that had Joseph and Nicodemus been able to prepare a richer tomb, they would not have buried Christ in that place."

† Saint Bridget, *Rev.* Lib. II. ch. xxi.

‡ Aloes and Myrrh were a very proper mixture to embalm the dead, because

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in a winding-sheet, they bound it round with strips,* and covered the head with a napkin. Although, among the Jews, women embalmed only the bodies of women, and men those of men, Silveira † believes that the Blessed Virgin aided Joseph and Nicodemus in this pious task. Oh! what must have been her affliction, to think how different these bands were from those in which she had swathed the body of the infant Jesus!

After honoring a thousand thousand times, with every mark of respect and love, the lifeless body of Jesus, they laid him in the tomb, his feet turned to the west and his back to Jerusalem; nor did they omit, Baronius ‡ assures us, to lay there the nails and crown of thorns. Last of all, the sepulchre was closed with a huge stone, to prevent any one entering. These holy personages accomplished the pious ceremony alone, but in the presence of a great number of witnesses: for the women of whom we have already spoken had remained, in order to see where the holy body might be placed, promising

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they are very bitter substances, which preserve from corruption, and used also to perfume the garments of the great. That Nicodemus gave a hundred pounds of these aromatics, shows his wealth and piety.

* From the words of the Gospel, it is clear that our Divine Redeemer's body was swathed in several cloths. Saint Augustine (*De Consens. Evang.* Lib. III. c. xxii.), says: "Their saying that Joseph wrapped him in one winding-sheet, does not prevent our understanding that other cloths might have been brought by Nicodemus and used, so that John might truly describe him as wrapped in not one, but many cloths." See Chifflet, Salmeron, and others, who have written on this point.

† Lib. viii. c. xxi. n. 51. We know by the Gospel that the women had returned to prepare aromatics and perfumes after the Sabbath.

‡ Ann. 34 and 113. Suarez, and most moderns think that the nails were laid in the tomb with the cross, since they were found with it. Historians do not agree as to the number of the nails; it seems most probable that there were four; so say Saint Bridget, Saint Gregory of Tours, Innocent III., and other credible authors.

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each other soon to return with precious aromatics to embalm him in his tomb.

What was Mary's grief when she beheld the object of her love enclosed beneath that cold stone. Ah! he only can realize it, who has always loved Jesus as Mary loved him. "O my Son! my Son!" she exclaimed, "how can I live without thee! O how cruel this separation! Happy tomb, thou now possessest him whom for nine months I bore in my womb! How I envy thee! Why am I not buried with him alive! Ah! I can at least say, since my Son is dead, that two hearts repose in one grave.* O tomb, thou hast robbed me of all, for thou hast taken my Son, my love, my only good, and my God!" Then she commended her Son to the Eternal Father,† unable to divert her sweet looks from that tomb: hardly could John, moved with compassion, withdraw her from that spot of grief, and conduct her to the house. Those who saw that mournful Mother pass could not withhold their tears,‡ and those who accompanied her, wept over her even more than over her Son.

So great was the pain suffered by that holy Mother on that memorable day, that the Church honors it yearly by a

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* "I may truly say, that when my Son was buried, there were two hearts in one grave." (Saint Bridget. *Rev.* Lib. XII. c. xxi.)

† Saint Bonaventure, *Medit. in Vita Christi.* c. lxxvi.

‡ "Multos etiam invitos ad lacrymas provocabat, et qui illam sequebantur super ipsam potius quam super dominum plangebant." (Saint Bernard.)

We should be prolix, and would doubtless relate things well known to many, if we undertook to speak, as antiquarians, of the spots sanctified by our Divine Redeemer's death, the precious relics of his passion, &c. We shall only say, that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is of the highest antiquity; it was built in the time of Constantine, through the piety of Saint Helena, in the form described by Adrichomius, and related by Cornelius a Lapide (*in Matt.* xxvii). Destroyed by Cosroes, and later by other barbarians, it has been rebuilt by the piety of the faithful. (See Geramb, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.*)

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festival, under the title of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin.*

* The Church, to show her gratitude to Mary, has incessantly stimulated piety towards her, and among other titles, invoked her as Mother of Sorrows. According to Father Alphonsus Muzzarelli, the first mention of the feast of the Compassion is in the acts of the Provincial Council of Cologne, in 1423. (Acta. c. ii.) This Synod fixed it on Friday in Passion week, to honor Jesus and his Blessed Mother, and obtain the conversion of the Hussites, those fierce heretics, who condemned to the flames every representation of our Crucified Redeemer, and his Holy Mother. (See LABBE.) Father Siniscalchi, in his work "The Martyrdom of the Heart of Mary, Mother of Grief," maintains that the feast is more ancient, and ascribes its institution to Pope Urban IV., who ordered it to be observed on the Friday before Palm Sunday; afterwards Popes Clement IV., and Martin IV., in 1285 encouraged it. However, we have no positive testimony as to its origin, and Pope Benedict XIV. does not speak of any. Pope Clement X. in 1674, at the request of Charles II., king of Spain, and Mary Anne of Austria, his queen, published a new bull establishing in all the states of that prince the feast of the Dolors of the Blessed Virgin, with the proper mass and office granted to the Servites. The same pope, with Innocent XI., and others, extended this pious privilege to other kingdoms and all provinces, so that there is now no part of the world where the Feast of the Dolors of the Blessed Virgin is not celebrated on that day.

It is unnecessary to add, that the Servites, full of zeal for devotion to the Mother of Sorrows, have celebrated since 1457, by a grant of Pope Alexander IV., who approved their Institute, a special Feast of the Seven Dolors of Mary, on the third Sunday of September; this festival has likewise become universal in the Church. (See BENEDICT XIV. *De Festis.*)



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CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S ANGUISH DURING THE THREE DAYS THAT OUR DIVINE REDEEMER LAY IN THE TOMB.

IT is difficult to determine precisely the spot where the Blessed Virgin remained till the glorious resurrection of her divine Son. Writers do not agree on the point. Metaphrastes * believes that she spent the whole time on Calvary, awaiting for the Messias to rise, as he had promised, triumphant from the tomb. But this opinion is now followed by none. She probably did not return to Bethany with Magdalen and the other holy women, because the sun had set when Christ was laid in the tomb, and it was unbecoming for Mary to travel by night the two miles that lay between that hamlet and the city of Jerusalem; she must moreover have been exhausted by her anguish and the pain which she had experienced that day. It is true that she herself revealed to Saint Brid-

* On the 15th August.

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get, that Saint John, to whom she had been confided, conducted her to the house,* but to whose house? This cannot be certainly told. Some writers believe that Mary was taken back to the house where she had spent the previous night.† For our part, we cannot admit this opinion, as we have stated that Mary arrived at Jerusalem only on the morning of that day. In so uncertain a question, if conjecture may be hazarded, we shall say that the Mother of Sorrows was led back to Jerusalem by John, to the house of some relative or friend, and that, desiring to spend those hours in meditation and solitude, she retired to the calmest part of the house.

The Apostles had fled, the disciples were scattered, the pious women were discouraged. In one word, after the Shepherd's death, all the flock had dispersed; Mary alone, as the Fathers and Doctors unanimously declare, unscandalized by the passion and death of Jesus Christ, sure that he would rise again on the third day—full of hope and faith Mary alone, in those days of mourning, represented the whole Church. Hence, Saint Bernard, or the author of the Treatise on the Passion, exclaims: "No man remained with him, nor woman, except her who alone is 'blessed among women,' who alone, through that sad Sabbath, stood firm in the faith, and in whom alone the church was preserved. Most fitly then does the whole church consecrate each Sabbath in the revolving year to the glory of that Virgin. O truly and singularly blessed branch, cut off from the vine by no fear! Cut off were those men who said: 'We hoped that it was he that should

* "His completis, venit ille bonus Joannes et duxit me in domum." (St. Bridget, *Rev.* l. c. xvi.) From this passage some conclude that Saint John was not on Calvary, at the descent from the cross and entombment of Christ. Yet the word "came," may be understood of his approaching the spot where Mary stood.

† Pipino. De *pass. Stat.* 7.

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have redeemed Israel.'—Cut off are the women, pious indeed, but seeking to render the dead an office of humanity, not believing that he would rise again." * In Mary alone, says Bartholomew of Trent, the faith remained alive when it was extinct in others.† We shall here briefly show how this faith did not prevent her being pierced with the sword of grief, when she remembered how her divine Son had suffered for men, and how cruel men had been to him. She understood that the real authors of Christ's passion were not the Jewish people that had sought his death, nor the priests and pontiffs who had deemed it expedient that one man should die for all, nor the Roman governor who condemned him, nor the executioners who nailed him to the cross, nor finally his heavenly Father, who had only accepted his death: but she beheld the sole cause of his suffering and death in sin and love. In fact, as Isaias says: "For the wickedness of my

* Although the learned Mabillon says that the *Mystic Vine* (or Treatise on the Passion of our Lord, on these words, "I am the true vine"), is not Saint Bernard's, but the work of some other learned, pious and eloquent writer of the time, this treatise has always been included in the works of the gentle doctor and abbot of Clairvaux. The author, citing a text, proceeds: "*Elegit Dominus infirma mundi ut confunderet fortia.*—Si vero fugam mentalem intelligimus, nec vir relictus est cum eo, nec mulier præter illam, quæ sola *benedicta est in mulieribus*, quæ sola per illud triste sabbatum stetit in fide, et salvata fuit ecclesia in ipsa sola. Propter quod aptissime tota Ecclesia in laudem et gloriam ejusdem Virginis diem sabbati per totius anni circulum celebrare consuevit. Vere et singulariter benedictus palmes, qui a sua vite nullo potuit timore præcidi. Abscissæ sunt mulieres quæ, quamvis piæ præveniunt mortuo humanitatis servitium exhibere, tamen illum resurrecturum nequaquam credebant."

† Bartholomew of Trent after saying: "In sola Maria fides viguit, in aliis extincta fuit," adds: "Quod significatur in candelis quæ extinguuntur," speaking of the tapers which are extinguished in the office of Tenebræ. Although several esteemed authors are of this opinion, Melchior Cano, with many others, gives another explanation of this custom of extinguishing the tapers: he says that in the ancient rite, matins were chanted during the night, in the catacombs, and at the tombs of the martyrs.

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people have I struck him," * and as the Apostle says: He suffered "for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us." †

The recollection of this ardent love of Jesus, which had induced him to suffer voluntarily and die for us, led Mary to consider the ingratitude of men, and consequently to recall, one by one, all the spiritual and corporal pains suffered by her divine Son. We have already spoken of the dolorous compassion of Mary; let us here limit ourselves to contemplating our dear and suffering Mother, who mourns all alone, abandoned by so many friends dear to her heart. Still, Mary's grief was not attended by that convulsive trembling, those rending cries, those passionate outbursts, which in others are the ordinary signs of great anguish. No! Mary's grief, immense indeed, was ever accompanied by fortitude, resignation, and faith. We believe then that, although in the first instants the sufferings of her Son rose before Mary's mind to rend her very heart, yet she meditated them one after another, thus teaching all the faithful how to meditate frequently the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer.

She remembered his last tender farewell on the eve of his passion; and recalling to her mind every word of that affectionate parting, her heart fainted with love and grief. Although Mary's life had been but one series of pain and fear, because she knew how her Son was one day to suffer, she nevertheless avowed that the thirty-three years ‡ which she had spent with him had passed rapidly, and that she felt in that hour all the overwhelming consciousness of a perpetual loss. She saw the impious and sacrilegious apostle, who, after witnessing

* Isaias liii. 8. † Ephes. ii. 4.

‡ There are various opinions as to the age of our Divine Redeemer at his death. Some say thirty years; others forty (CHRYSOST. *in Joan. Hom.* liv.), or even fifty (IRENÆUS, *Lib. II. Hæres.* c. xxxix.); the most common opinion is that he was thirty-three, or entering his thirty-fourth.

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so many miracles, and received as nourishment the flesh and blood of the Divine Lamb,* had sold his master for a few pence, and pointed him out to his enemies by the kiss of peace that Jesus was wont to exchange with his well-beloved disciples. She considered her divine Son praying in the garden of Gethsemani,† not far from the three chosen disciples,‡ who, though warned by him to watch, had sunk in a profound slumber; and yet, at that very moment, after permitting suffering to come upon him,§ he was, as it were, in agony, and fell repeatedly with his face to the earth, so that he prayed his Heavenly Father to deliver him from death. Mary knew well what a fierce struggle her Son had to endure in his soul, a prey to grief, when an angel had to come and comfort him, and when in his violent grief he sweated blood ‖ in such abundance as to bedew the earth all around him.

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* Saint Hilary (*in Matth.*), Saint Clement (*Lib. V.* c. xvi.), Theophylact, Rupert, Innocent III., and several Fathers, affirm that Judas did not receive communion from our Redeemer's hands.

† According to the computation of Adrichomius, cited by Cornelius a Lapide (*in Matth.* xxvii.), from the supper room to the garden of Gethsemani, our Lord walked one hundred and fifty paces of two feet and a half. In this garden, according to the same author, there was a grotto. Maldonado says (*in Matth.* xxvi.), that in this field there were several gardens, and that Jesus, according to his custom, proceeded to Gethsemani, or the *eighth garden*. The more common opinion, however, interprets this word "*valley of olives*," in consequence of the number of olive trees which grew there. Silveira says, that according to the Hebrew radical, it means *oil-press*, because there stood in the field a mill to press the olives, which were produced in abundance on that mountain; hence he concludes, that the name corresponded not inaptly to our Redeemer's passion.

‡ It seems past doubt that Our Lord entered the garden with all his disciples; Saint Luke says so expressly.

§ Jesus, on offering himself as a victim to the divine justice, gave suffering full power to afflict his sacred humanity, and to put it to death.

‖ Although as Cornelius a Lapide teaches, on the authority of Aristotle, a man may naturally sweat blood, yet we are of the opinion of those who say that, without a miracle, the blood could not be in such abundance. Silveira (*Lib. VIII.* c. i. n. 165), on the authority of the Fathers and Doctors, says that the blood flowed

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She beheld him seized, bound like a vile malefactor by a numerous mob: more cruel than a lion to his prey, these savages throw him down, strike him, outrage him in a thousand ways, pouring out the while their horrid blasphemies.* At these remembrances more copious tears gushed from the eyes of the Blessed Virgin, and she sighed ardently to think of the still greater opprobrium, outrages and pains, reserved for the holy victim of love. She remembered with pain, that all the disciples had fled at once, and that Peter, who had followed his Master from afar, and boasted of his readiness to die for him, had not remained firm and faithful, even before two serving-maids that questioned him; but had openly forsworn himself in the high priest's court, protesting that he knew not the man. And yet was he not the apostle destined to be the head of the Church, and the perpetual Vicar of Christ on earth? Mary beheld her divine Son meekly answer him who smote his cheek, so horrible a sacrilege, that the heavens trembled, that the earth shook to its base, and angels covered their faces with their wings.† She finally beheld him dragged from one tribunal to another, ever loaded with outrages, and during the rest of the night, shut up in a prison with such cruelties,‡ that we cannot conceive how the mind of man could have devised them.

The Virgin, in her profound recollection, beheld in spirit all these sad scenes as fresh as if they transpired before her eyes. Who can tell the unspeakable sorrow of that tender mother, when she remembered the cries of that populace that

from his head, arms, hands, feet; in fine, from all parts of his body, in such quantities, that the ground was moistened.

* Saint Bridget. *Revel.* Lib. I. c. xix.

† Saint Ephrem. *Serm. I. de Passione.*

‡ The outrages committed against our Divine Redeemer that night were so many, that we shall know them only on the day of the last judgment.

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preferred Barabbas to her divine Son; the rage of the executioners, who, after binding him to a pillar,* spent themselves in scourging him. Saint Bridget† relates that the scourges ploughed up the flesh as a coulter does the earth, and that no part of his holy body was without a wound or bruise,‡ and yet, untouched by such sufferings, these impious wretches incessantly demanded the death of the innocent victim.

Mary also thought of the grief of her Son, when his sacred head, crowned with plaited thorns,§ was all torn,‖ so that the King of Sorrows had his face bathed in blood. She remembered how Pilate, touched with pity, showed him to the people, to move them by compassion, and thus prevent their

* Many say that Christ was scourged first at the great pillar, his hands and feet tied, and his face to the pillar; that then to scourge him more, he was bound by the hands alone to the smaller one. It is commonly stated that the number of blows was six thousand six hundred and sixty-six. It was indeed forbidden in Deuteronomy to give over forty blows, hence only thirty-nine were given, as Saint Paul relates. But the Romans, who scourged at a pillar differently from the Hebrews, stretching the patient on the ground with his face to the dust, gave so many blows, that according to Ulpius the person scourged sometimes expired beneath the lash.

† *Rev.* Lib. IV. c. lxx.

‡ Saint Lawrence Justinian, *de Triumph. Agon. Christi.*

§ The Commentators on Holy Writ differ as to the kind of these thorns, and the manner in which they were plaited. Toledo and Suarez, on the authority of many others, and particularly of Saint Vincent Terrer, say that the crown was made of sea-rushes. Gretser, Francis Lucas, Martin del Rio, and others, think it a kind of bramble thus described by Guthymius (*in Ps.* lv.): "Ramnum dumornm quiddam genus est quod maximis atque acutissimus refectum est aculeis." Silveira (*Lib.* VIII. c. ii. n. 54), Barrada (*Tom. IV. Lib.* VII. c. vii.), and Cornelius a Lapide (*Matt.* xxvii.), believe that the two kinds of thorns were plaited together. Some suppose that this band of thorns was of the form of a royal crown or diadem, others that it resembled a helmet or armet. St. Lawrence Justinian (*Lib. I.* c. xiv. *de Agon. Christi.*), here makes a beautiful reflection; he says that earthly dignities may be well compared to the reed, green without, and emptiness within.

‖ The thorny crown wounds with a thousand points his beauteous head. (Saint Bernard, *de Passione.*)

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raging against a man in whom the human countenance was no longer discernible, and in whom that very judge found no cause of death. But the judge's hope was deceived, when he heard the scribes, the Pharisees, the priests and the Jews cry out with one voice: "Crucify him! we have no King but Cæsar!" O who can express the grief of the desolate Virgin when she remembered the blindness of the Jews, and the weakness of that judge who condemned the innocent one to death? She admired her Son voluntarily embracing that cross desired by him from the very moment of his incarnation. She beheld him, maltreated by that brutal mob, fall several times to the ground,* so that, moved not by pity, but by fear that he might not reach Golgotha alive, they had forced a man

* That our Divine Redeemer, weakened by loss of blood, and the constant privation he had endured from the preceding evening, fell several times on his way to Calvary, seems to be beyond all doubt, more especially as some commentators believe that Jesus underwent two flagellations, the Hebrew, and the Roman. The latter was, we have shown, very cruel, and as Lipsius (*de Cruce.*) remarks, all who were condemned to death underwent this penalty. Is it then astonishing that Jesus, loaded with a heavy cross, made of two trees, so as to bear a man, fell repeatedly? Lipsius (*ed.* c. vii.) proves that the condemned were scourged to the cross, loaded with outrages, and goaded in their march. It is not then a mystic exaggeration, if Saint Anselm, Lanspergius, Saint Bridget, Saint Mathilda, and many other pious and learned writers dwell on these outrages. We close this note by the beautiful reflection of the poet Tansilla, on the fall of our Divine Redeemer.

"How on meek Jesu's shoulders pressed the tree,
Whose branches bore the world's iniquity!
What groans that cross drew forth, on which displayed,
We each our several sins had ingrate laid.
And yet, strange goodness in that Saviour dear,
The bitter cause, the cross makes light to bear.
O sight divine! The fainting Saviour falls,
And can I breathe, when Nature shuddering calls
For wrath divine? Can I that visage high,
So meek, so pure, behold all blood-disfigured lie?
O come ye angels from your starry thrones,
Filled with adoring love, in heavenly tones
To cheer our suffering God in that dread path,
And save him from vile man's demoniac wrath."

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of Cyrene to bear the cross. She remembered how her maternal eyes had met those of Jesus, while, all torn and bruised, he went to Calvary ; with what cruelty he was stripped again, nailed, and raised on the tree of the cross, where he did not remain idle, but whence he spoke, did and taught things useful to us, since his first words were a prayer to his Father for the pardon of his executioners.

She meditated the last words of Jesus expiring ; she weighed their mysterious meaning ; she found in his words all the outpourings of an infinite love. The trouble of nature revealed to her a dying God ; and on beholding the faith extinct or paralyzed in all our Redeemer's disciples, she renewed her own, and believed firmly, that on the third day the Messias, triumphant over sin and death, would rise again to life and glory. It is true, that, reflecting on the small number of those who would profit by that divine sacrifice, she sank into a new abyss of sorrow, and could exclaim with the prophet Jeremias : " Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress, my bowels are troubled : my heart is turned within me, for I am full of bitterness . . . . they have heard that I sigh, and there is none to comfort me " * . . . . "I had a son," she continued ; " he wrought great prodigies, and men are blind and ungrateful ; he has brought wisdom to the nations, and they have not believed his doctrine ; he has passed, healing and doing good, and his reward has been outrages, sufferings, and an ignominious death in the very flower of his days."

O desolate Mary ! O most afflicted of all women ! To what shall I compare thee ? or to what shall I liken thee ? O daughter of Jerusalem, to what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O Virgin daughter of Sion ! † Two ardent

* Jeremias. Lament. i. 20. † Jeremias. Lament. ii. 13.

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loves are enthroned in thy heart: the love of God and the love of humanity, and both consume thee. The former leads thee to acknowledge in the fruit of thy chaste womb a God dead amid pain and torment: the latter leads thee to see with what ingratitude men have returned that unspeakable love, and how for many that passion of thy divine Son, instead of being a salutary remedy, will be a cause of condemnation. At these thoughts Mary weeps, and she weeps bitterly, and none of her friends can console her; for it is the pious sentiment of ascetic authors, that, touched with pity at the plaintive sighs of that loving dove, John, and the women who occupied the house in which Mary received hospitality, entered her chamber to afford some consolation to that desolate mother. But what consolation could the Blessed Virgin receive from them? All was gone, now that she was deprived of her Son. "O Lady," we shall cry with Saint Bonaventure, "why hast thou immolated thyself for us? Did not the passion of thy Son suffice for us, without the crucifixion of the mother? O heart of love, why art thou changed into a globe of sorrows?" * The sword that pierced her on the mountain, pierced her also in that hospitable home. She spent the days and nights in watching and tears. "Our Lady, I look upon thy heart, and I see not a heart, but myrrh, and wormwood, and gall. I seek the Mother of God; and lo, I find ignominy, and bruises, and wounds; for thou art all changed into these. O full of bitterness, what hast thou done? Why, vessel of sanctity, hast thou become a vessel of penalty? Our Lady, why hast thou gone to Calvary? O wounded Lady, wound our hearts, and renew in our hearts thy

* "O Domina cur ivisti immolari pro nobis? Numquid non sufficiebat filii passio nobis, nisi crucifigeretur et mater? O cor amoris, cur conversum es in globum doloris?" (*In Stim. Amor.*)

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passion and thy Son's. Unite thy wounded heart to ours, that we too may be wounded with thy wounds."*

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* Aspicio, Domina, cor tuum et id non cor sed myrrham et absynthium et fel video. Quæro matrem Dei et ecce invenio spucta, flagella et vulnera, quia tota conversa es in ista. O amaritudine plena quid fecisti? Cur vas sanctitatis fecisti vas pœnalitatis? O Domina, quare ivisti ad Calvariæ locum? O vulnerata Domina, vulnera corda nostra et in cordibus nostris tuam et filii tui renova passionem. Cor tuum vulneratum conjunge cordi nostro, ut tecum tuis vulneribus pariter vulneremur. (St. Bonaventure, *in eodem loco.*)

Pius VII., of holy memory, by a rescript of February 15th, 1815, granted to all the faithful, who between three o'clock in the evening on Good Friday, and ten in the morning on Holy Saturday, associate themselves in prayer or meditation for an hour, or at least half an hour with the desolate Virgin Mother, a plenary indulgence on the day when they fulfil their Easter duty, by confession and communion. By a rescript of the 21st of the same month, the same Sovereign Pontiff granted 300 days' indulgence to any one practising this exercise in any other week, and a plenary indulgence the last week of each month.





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CHAPTER IX.

MARY FIRST BEHOLDS CHRIST RISEN, AND CONVERSES WITH HIM.

ON the following day, which was the Sabbath, as Saint Matthew relates,* the chief priests and Pharisees assembled at Pilate's palace, saying: "Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day: lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error shall be worse than the first." † Pilate said

* Matt. xxvii. 62.

† Cornelius a Lapide in his commentary on Matt. xxvii. 64, says that the chief priests used this pretext, because they really feared that Christ would rise again, and that they set guards around the sepulchre either to prevent his resurrection, or to seize and put him to death again if he rose.

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to them: "You have a guard; go, guard it, as you know." And they, departing, not only set guards around the sepulchre, but also, for greater security, closed the stone with an iron ring,* after sealing it.† But God, who mocks the precautoins of human wisdom, and against whom the most subtle schemes cannot prevail, availed himself of this very crafty prudence of the Jews to show more strikingly his miraculous resurrection. Now on the morrow of the Sabbath, that is on Sunday, the pious women, in the morning, came to the sepulchre to embalm the body of Jesus with ointments, which they had bought the evening before; and as they walked along, they asked each other how they should contrive to remove the stone that closed the mouth of the sepulchre. They arrived at the spot when the sun had already risen, and looking, they saw that the stone had been removed; then entering the sepulchre, they perceived an angel clothed in a white garment, who bade this pious company not to fear, that Christ

* This is the opinion of Nicephorus, St. Adamnan, Bede, Baronius, and others: the Venerable Bede (*de Locis Sanctis.*), adds, that the remains of the iron rings were to be seen in his time.

† Some say that the stone was sealed with the sanhedrim seal, others, with Pilate's. It is pretended that the guard which watched the sepulchre was a hundred soldiers, some of whom watched within, others without the garden. We think that they were much less numerous.

‡ It may be that the angel seen by the holy women was the same already seen by the soldiers. Descending from heaven at the sound of the earthquake, this angel had removed the stone of the sepulchre and sat upon it. It appears certain that when he spoke to the holy women, he laid aside the awful aspect of an angel to assume the human form; hence St. Mark says: "They saw a young man;" for had these women supposed him to be an angel, they would at once have credited his words. All these and similar questions arise, because the history of Christ's resurrection, although sufficiently detailed, is not given in the same way by all the Evangelists, as some relate circumstances omitted or differently presented by others. It is, moreover, very probable that the Evangelists have neglected to relate some facts then well known to all. If we are asked why Christ appeared first to the women, we may answer with Saint Augustine (Serm. ccxxxii.

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had arisen as he had promised. Filled at once with joy and fear, they wished to announce this sweet tidings to the Apostles, but not to the others, for they still feared, so feeble was their faith. The eleven Apostles learned that Jesus was alive ; to make sure of the fact, by seeing it with their own eyes, Peter and John ran first with another disciple, whose name is not given in the sacred text.

According to Saint Mark * and Saint John,† Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had expelled seven devils. She stood without the sepulchre, weeping bitterly, and while she wept, she stooped to see whether the remains of her dear Lord were not there. She saw two angels clothed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been laid, the one at the head, the other at the feet : touched with pity, they asked her why she wept .... She had not yet replied, when she saw Jesus standing near her. She did not recognize him, but supposing him to be the gardener, she begged him to tell her where he had put the body, that she might adore it. Our Divine Redeemer made himself known to her, by merely pronouncing her name, Mary ; and then bade her tell his disciples what she had seen with her eyes.

Saint Matthew ‡ speaks of another apparition to the pious women. Saint Luke § relates at length how Jesus manifested himself to two disciples in the hamlet of Emmaus ; how on the evening of that same day,‖ Jesus appeared to his disciples, who were gathered at table and kept the door closed for fear

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c. ii.), that as the fall of man took place by means of a woman, so the tidings of the resurrection should be spread by means of a woman. Saint Hilary (in Matt. xxxiii.), Euthymius (*Enarr. in Evang. Matt.*), and others, are of the same opinion.

* St. Mark xvi. 9. † St. John xx. 11. ‡ St. Matthew xxviii. 9.

§ St. Luke xxiv. 13.

‖ St. John xx. 19. St. Mark xvi. 14. St. Luke xxiv. 36.

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of the Jews. The Evangelists continue to relate to us how Our Lord confirmed his resurrection during the forty days that he vouchsafed to remain on earth. It is, therefore, impossible to doubt the resurrection of Christ on the third day after his death.

None of the Evangelists speak of the apparition of Jesus to his Blessed Mother; we shall, however, endeavor to show how probable it is that she was first rejoiced by his august presence. Without stopping to consider the vain pretexts employed by the Jews to conceal Christ's resurrection, and without showing how ridiculous it was to ask men to credit the account of guards who were asleep, we shall examine the motives which support an opinion so pious and reasonable as that which we mention.

It was certainly becoming in our Divine Redeemer before appearing to any other, to appear to his Blessed Mother, to console her in her grief, and thus reward her for her lively faith and ardent love. Now each of these motives, taken singly, would be more than sufficient to prove the becomingness of such an apparition; how then can we but believe that this apparition really took place, when all three motives are united? How could Jesus, the most tender, affectionate, holy of sons, who, at the moment when he expired on the cross, turned his latest thought to Mary, and would not leave her without support; * how could Jesus, who suffered more from Mary's pain than his own, and wished by an admirable providence to associate her in all his pains, how could he but visit her the first?

Should he not console her as soon as possible in those pains which it is not given the human mind to understand,

* See Mantuanus, Lyranus, and other commentators on Holy Scripture, who all adopt this opinion.



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nor human lips to express, eloquent as they may be? Should he not thus reward the ardent, lively faith of his most gentle mother? Ah! if the Blessed Virgin loved our Redeemer above all creatures, and if she was loved by him with an equal love when he lived, and if in the lives of the Saints we read that Jesus appeared to the most beloved souls, can we believe that Jesus, after his resurrection, loved his Mother less than he loved Magdalen, Saint Peter, and all those of whom the Scriptures speak? Have we not said, and does not Saint John at the close of his Gospel tell us, that many facts are passed over in silence? And is it not, perhaps, because these facts were known to all, and no one doubted them? After all, why need we recur to reasons of propriety when a Saint Ambrose,* following the Fathers, is of this opinion; when such is the opinion of the Irish Sedulius,† who, though a poet, has nevertheless, as all know, high authority in sacred history; of a Saint Bonaventure; ‡ of a Saint Ignatius; § of

* Vidit ergo Maria resurrectionem Domini, et prima vidit et credidit. Vidit et Maria Magdalena, quamvis adhuc ista nutaret. (Lib. Ult. *de Virg.* c. iii.) "Mary then beheld the resurrection of our Lord, and saw it first, and believed. Mary Magdalen saw it too, although she hesitated." This opinion seems to be also that of Saint Irenæus, from whom Saint Ambrose takes it. (*Fevardentius in op. St. Irenæi*, Lib. V. c. xxxi.)

† Quæ cum clarifico semper sit nomine Mater,
Semper Virgo manet. Hujus se visibus adstans
Luce palmam Dominus prius obtulit, ut bona Mater
Grandia divulgans miracula, quæ fuit olim
Advenientis iter; hæc est redeuntis et index.
Lib. V. *oper. Pasch.* v. 362.

And while her praises humbly here I chant,
May she ne'er lose a mother's name endeared,
Who Virgin ever is. First to her gaze
Our Lord his glorious palm in light displayed,
That his good Mother, heralding great deeds,
The pathway erst of the Messias coming,
Be the Index now of his returning way.

‡ Meditat. in Vita Christi, c. lxxxvii.

§ Exercitia spiritualia. *De myst. Vit. D. N. I. C.*

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the faithful disciple of Saint Anselm,* who adds that the Evangelists have always passed over in silence, what it is useless to tell? Now, if it had been written that Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to his Mother, who would not deem this statement superfluous, when it is generally stated that he appeared to many? Would it not be assimilating the Queen of Heaven to such a man or such a woman to whom Jesus appeared? Why seek other authorities, when Saint Bridget relates† that Our Redeemer had scarcely risen from

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* Si aliquis quærit cur evangelistæ non referant ipsum piissimum Dominum a morte resurgentem huic suæ dulcissimæ Matri, ut ejus dolores mitigaret, primo ac præcipue apparuisse, dicimus quid a quodam sapiente de hoc ipso sciscitantes audivimus. Ait ergo: Tanta esse scitur auctoritas narrationis evangelicæ, ut nihil in ea dependens, nihil inane, nihil superfluum reperiatur. Itaque, si Matri Domini, si dominæ mundi, ipse filius ejus ab inferno resurgens scriberetur, sicut alii cuilibet, apparuisse, eamque de sua resurrectione docuisse, quis non tale scriptum superfluum duceret? Reginam videlicet cæli et terræ omnisque creaturæ coæquaret illi vel illi quibus apparuit, viro aut mulieri. Spiritus ejus in illa plene perfecteque quiescebat, qui sibi et esse illius et facta ejus omnia luce clarius revelebat, et evangelistæ scriberent tunc vel tunc illi talem ac talem semet exhibuisse. (*De Excell. Virginis Mariæ* c. vi.) It is now the opinion of the learned, and especially of Gerberon, the editor of the works of St. Anselm, that this book, although cited under the name of the holy archbishop of Canterbury, was really written by Edmer or Eadmer, the disciple of Saint Anselm.

† Mihi vero quæ sum Mater Dei, cum post mortem ejus incomprehensibili dolore mæsta essem, apparuit idem Filius meus prius quam aliis, et palpabilem se obtulit mihi, osculans me et commemorans se visibiliter in cœlum ascensurum; et quamvis hoc non sit scriptum propter humilitatem meam, tamen hæc est veritas, quod Filius meus resurgens primo mihi apparuit quam alicui alii. (*Revel. Lib. VI.* c. xciv.)

Saint Teresa, and Saint Bernardine of Sienna confirm Saint Bridget. The former, as we see in her life by Father Frederic of San Antonio (Bk. III. c. iv.), relates that Our Lord appeared to her one day, and told her that immediately on his resurrection, he visited his most holy mother, and conversed long with her, and filled her with unspeakable joy. Benedict XIV., in his annotations on holy Saturday, cites this revelation in proof of this pious belief of almost all the faithful. Saint Bernardine of Sienna, not only maintains this opinion, but also refutes the captious arguments of its opponents. We shall here cite some of his chief argu-



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the tomb when he appeared before the Blessed Virgin, displaying himself to her as the conqueror of death and sin, and giving her his sacred wounds to kiss? "O my Mother," he doubtless said, "O holy Mother, cease thy tears and sighs. The human race is redeemed; my blood has paid its ransom;

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ments: "Because the gospel narrative is silent as to his consolation of his blessed mother, after his resurrection, we are not therefore to believe that the most benign Jesus, the fountain of consolation and grace, who strove so to console others, forgot his mother, who alone, as he knew, had fully tasted the bitterness of his death. It pleased Divine Providence to unveil nothing of this in the gospel, and chiefly for three reasons: First for firmness, secondly for infidelity, third for sublimity. First for firmness; for so firmly convinced was the Blessed Virgin of the resurrection of her Son, that she was not agitated by the least doubt on the point. It was indeed most easy for her to believe it, who had been chosen by a most special grace to be Mother of Christ, Queen of Angels, and Mistress of the Universe. By the very silence then of the Scriptures, it is shown that it should be held as more indubitable than any writing would make it. Because as it clearly appears, the Scripture has laid such foundations, that the high enlightened mind concludes greater things than tongue or letter can explain. It lays down the manner of his sublime conception, the angel announcing, and the Holy Ghost overshadowing, and it describes her as the mournful mother of the dying God, and her standing by the cross. But if it is true, most true what the Apostle says: "As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation" (II. Cor. i. 7.), how much, O Virgin Mother, wast thou associated in the resurrection of thy Son! Therefore it is most certainly to be held that the most sweet Son, first and before all others, consoled her with the glorious joy of his resurrection. This the Holy Roman Church seems to think, as it appoints the Easter station at St. Mary Major's. If you wish to argue that he did not appear to her bodily, because the Evangelists do not say so, it will be necessary for us piously to conclude, that she never saw him at all in this world in the joy of his resurrection, because he is related to have appeared to his mother neither first nor last nor at any other time." Developing, then, the second motive, namely, that Christ was to appear to some to fortify them in the faith, to render them witnesses of the fact, he proceeds to say that, considering the sublimity of the Mother of God, no one should speak of her; and in fact the Evangelists speak little of her before the resurrection, and after it say nothing. He also says that two apparitions took place, one corporal, the other spiritual, the second better than the first; that he admits that Jesus appeared first corporally to Magdalen. He finally concludes that the Blessed Virgin had no need of such an apparition to be fortified in the faith.

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the gates of heaven are about to open. See that troop of risen just who attend me ; behold among them David, thy royal ancestor ; behold thy holy mother and Joseph thy chaste spouse ; with them I shall soar to heaven, to prepare the throne that is due thee as my most holy Mother, as Queen of Angels, martyrs and all Saints." At these words the humble Mary, as I think, prostrated herself to adore her divine Son, and kissed one after another his five wounds, which radiated with a light capable of eclipsing the light of the sun, when it shines in the midst of its course in a pure sky.

Saint Vincent Ferrer * believes that Jesus had announced his resurrection to Mary by the ministry of the archangel Gabriel, who addressed her this anthem : † "O Queen of Heaven ! rejoice, for He whom thou wast found meet to bear, has risen as he said." "It is true," pursues Saint Vincent Ferrer, "that it was revealed to the illustrious Pope, Saint Gregory, who ordered this salutation to be chanted with these words, 'Pray for us to God ! Alleluia !' ‡ as the Church still chants in Easter tide : that Jesus addressed his mother in the same words that he employed to salute the apostles in the upper chamber : 'Peace be with you ;'— that He himself, embracing her with the most tender love, wiped away his Blessed Mother's tears and said : 'Rejoice, my dearest Mother, henceforth thy life shall be a life of joy and happi-

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* *Serm. I. Paschæ.*

† Regina cœli lætare, Alleluia.
Quia quem meruisti portare, Alleluia.
Resurrexit sicut dixit, Alleluia.
Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia.

‡ Et Jesus salutavit Matrem dicens : Pax vobis. Virgo autem, flexis genibus et plena lacrymis, præ gaudio adoravit eum osculando manus et pedes, et Christus osculando matrem dixit : Mater mea, gaude, quia jam de cætero non habebis nisi gaudium et lætitiam, tergendo ei lacrymas, et sedit in cathedra, et loquebantur simul valde dulciter. (St. Vincent Ferrer. *Serm. I. Paschæ.*)

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ness;' and that then he sat down beside her, and they conversed sweetly together.

Rupert, the abbot, throws great light on the opinion which we have adopted; he not only says clearly that Jesus risen, that is, impassible, immortal and glorious, appeared to his Mother before appearing to any other, announcing the glorious victory which he had achieved: that he allowed her to kiss the wounds made in that flesh which he had received in Mary's virginal womb; but this author also refutes the objections drawn from the Gospel, which says expressly that Jesus first appeared to Magdalene. "The Blessed Virgin," says the learned abbot, "must not be counted among the witnesses whom alone it concerned the Evangelists to name, or to whom it became to announce the resurrection of Christ. Did it become her to proclaim it that her words might seem to the apostles ravings? If the words of the other women seemed to them as ravings, how much more would they think that the Mother raved from love of her Son? Most surely then did the Son arising appear to his Mother, but she, as she had begun in the beginning, kept all these words, meditating them in her heart. But if it seems not true, because none of the Evangelists attest this in writing, the consequence is, that Christ never after his resurrection appeared to his Mother, because not one of the Evangelists mentions when or where he appeared to her? Far from us such a suspicion. God forbid, I say, that such harsh negligence in such a Son, should dishonor a mother, for his sake pierced with the sword of grief!" *

* Redivivus filius illi (Mariæ) ante omnes fortasse mortales, materno virginem non defraudans honore, victoriam suam annuntiavit, et dulcia carnis suæ vulnera, quam illa carnem de carne sua conceptam peperit, deosculanda præbuit. Quid ergo? Repugnare videbitur Evangelio referenti quod surgens Jesus primo Mariæ

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We may, therefore, without fear of error, believe with Suarez,* that our Redeemer gladdened his Blessed Mother with his glorious presence, before appearing to any other. Without seeking the precise moment when this opinion began to prevail, we firmly believe that it has always been the opinion of the Church.

We willingly subscribe, say what others may to the contrary,† to the authority of so learned and profound a theologian, and hold for certain, that if our Lord vouchsafed to appear to those of whom the sacred text speaks, he must

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Magdalenæ apparuit? Absit: sed omnibus (beatam Virginem Matrem excepimus) testibus præordinatis, quos solos nominare ad evangelistas pertinuit, vel quos Christi resurrectionem annuntiare decuit? Numquid illam nuntiare decebat, ut verba ejus tanquam deliramenta viderentur ante apostolos? Si enim extranearum verba fœminarum visa sunt eis tanquam deliramenta, quomodo non magis matrem amore filii delirare crederent? Verissime ergo matri filius resurgens apparuit, sed illa, ut ab initio cœperat, ita et nunc conservabat omnia verba hæc, conferens in corde suo. Quod si idcirco verum non videtur quia nullus Evangelistarum scriptis hoc attestatur, consequens est quod nunquam post resurrectionem suam visus sit Matri, quia quando vel ubi apparuerit, nullus eorum edixit. Absit, inquam, ut matrem propter se doloris gladio tansverberatam tam dura negligentia talis filius inhonoraverit.

* Nihilominus absque ulla dubitatione credendum est Christum post resurrectionem primum omnium matri suæ apparuisse. Quæ sententia ex ipsis terminis adeo est per se credibilis, ut fere sine controversia omnium fidelium et doctorum animis insederit; atque ita docent omnes scriptores catholici qui hanc quæstionem attigerunt. Unde videtur hic fuisse perpetuus Ecclesiæ sensus, quia nullum reperimus initium quando hoc cœperit in Ecclesia doceri. Et quamvis antiqui Patres id frequenter non asserant, non ideo est quia contrarium sentirent (nunquam enim hoc negarunt) sed quia solum ennarrabant quæ ab evangelistis scripta sunt. Neque vero omnino desunt nobis antiquitatis vestigia et testimonia. (Tom. II. in 3 p. D. Thomæ. diss. xlix. sect. 9.)

† The celebrated commentator Estius (in Marc. c. xxvi.), says that he is not ignorant that many pious persons have believed that our Divine Redeemer appeared first to his Blessed Mother; and although he does not formally condemn this opinion, he advocates the contrary: 1st. Because Christ appeared to those who were to render testimony of his resurrection: 2d. Because he wished to confirm those whose faith was weak, and who needed consolation, like Magdalen, who had

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have appeared to Mary Immaculate ; and we are not far from believing that he frequently honored her with his royal presence during the forty days which preceded his ascension. Thus the Blessed Virgin was the more consoled and gladdened, as she had been more desolate and overwhelmed with grief. We may then apply to her these words : "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul." *

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loved him greatly ; Peter, who had bitterly wept his denial of his Lord ; the apostles, who had been seized with fear. Mary, on the contrary, most firm in the faith, had no need of this consolation. The eminent Hyacinth Serry endeavors to prove the same. We think we have sufficiently refuted by solid proofs the arguments of Estius and the rest, who are indeed few. To the testimonies adduced by us, we shall add that of Casaubon (Exercit. xvi. q. 118), who relying on Baronius, says : "Beatæ Virgini Christum a resurrectione apparuisse omnium primæ asserit Baronius ex veteri, ut ait, traditione. Neque ego velim contra tenere. Scio Sedulium poetam id olim dixisse, postea alios."

* Ps. xciii. 19.







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CHAPTER X.

MARY WITNESSES THE ASCENSION OF OUR DIVINE REDEEMER, AND RETURNS TO JERUSALEM.



ALTHOUGH the Blessed Virgin was often rejoiced by the sweet presence of Jesus risen, and never more experienced that cruel anguish of which we have endeavored to give a faint outline, yet it is certain that she never forgot all that her beloved Son had suffered for the redemption of the human race. Not only has she first taught us with what care we should meditate the passion of our Divine Lord, but some sacred writers, and particularly the mystics, say, moreover, that whenever she went to Jerusalem, either alone or in company with the other holy women, she visited and venerated those spots bedewed with the blood of our Divine Redeemer, and the sepulchre in which the body of Jesus had lain for three days. Sometimes she returned thanks to her divine

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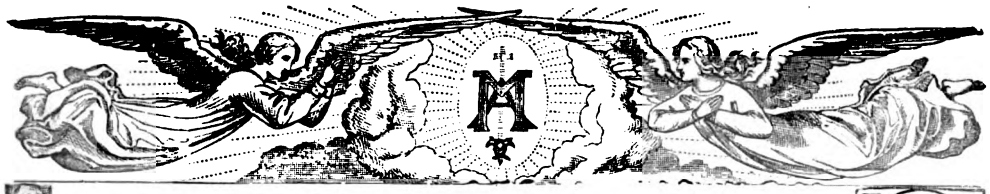
Son for all that he had suffered for the salvation of the world, and sometimes she gave course to that sweet and mysterious grief, of which we can form some idea from a Saint Catharine of Siena, a Saint Clara of Montefalcone, a Saint Catharine of Ricci, a Saint Veronica Giuliani, and other holy and privileged souls, that have been consumed with love contemplating a God suffering, crucified, dead for us. Saint Odilo * relates, that not satisfied with visiting the mountain where Jesus suffered, died, and rose again, she also went to that blessed grotto where she bore him. There she shed sweet tears : there she imprinted sweet kisses on that fortunate earth, and consoled by the sight of these holy spots, she returned to the society of the Apostles ; † for as she had been recommended to John, it is probable that he wished her near him ; now John then lived with the other Apostles. Mary must, therefore, have been among them, and this could not but have afforded them unspeakable consolation.

For forty days our glorified Redeemer had now conversed with men on earth, the better to assure them of his noble victory achieved over death, when it pleased him to ascend to heaven, as he had said. To give this prodigy greater solem-

* Si scire volumus quid Genitrix post resurrectionem Domini, antequam ipse cœlos ascenderet, agebat, sine dubio loca Dominicæ navititatis, passionis, sepulturæ et resurrectionis frequenter circumiens invisere capiebat. In eisdem etiam locis lacrymas fundebat, et sanctissimi oris sui oscula dulcissima imprimebat. Deinde ad notum sibi refugium, apostolicum videlicet contubernium, post intuitum dominicorum locorum cum gaudio remeabat. (*Serm. de Assump.* Tom. XVII. Bibl. Patr.)

† There is no doubt that the Blessed Virgin was the first who began to visit the holy places, that is to say, the spots which had been sanctified by the presence of Christ. The faithful always kept them in remembrance so well, that the tradition was handed down from father to son. The empress Saint Helena did not leave the least spot unvisited, as Eusebius relates in his life of Constantine (Lib. III. c. xli.) He speaks not only of this Empress, but he says that persons came from all parts of the world to visit the holy places. Thus began the pilgrimages to the Holy Land, less frequent now than formerly, but yet still made by many.

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nity and more magnificent pomp, he wished himself to admonish the Apostles of it. When Jesus appeared to them for the last time, they were all at Jerusalem, at table in the Cenacleor chamber,* as Saint Augustine,† Saint Gregory,‡ Saint Bede,§ Lyranus,‖ and many others, with Suarez ¶ and Silveira ** maintain. He first gently reproached them with their incredulity; not, says Saint Augustine,†† that they had not then a perfect faith in him, after his frequent appearances to them, but because they had not believed the words of the holy women, and had wished to see him with their own eyes. After commanding them to preach the Gospel throughout the whole world, to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all who should believe in him, he foretold the miracles which they should do in his name, whether he spoke in the literal sense or in the figurative sense, as Saint Bernard ‡‡ and Saint Gregory the

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* That each may form a clear idea of the Cenacle, and know what place it was, we shall say briefly, that the Jews usually had one room larger than the rest, entirely separated from the remainder of the house. There all the members of the family assembled on domestic feasts, and to eat the paschal lamb. This chamber was larger or smaller according to the fortune of the owner, and was called a Cenacle. (*In Gen.* vi.) God commanded Noe to make several cenacles. It is traditional that the house where Jesus eat the Last Supper belonged to John, surnamed Mark, the companion of Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas in their preaching. Many think it belonged to some other. It is supposed that the apostles took refuge there at the time of our Lord's passion, that there Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection, and the Holy Ghost came down on Whitsunday.

† *De Consens. Evangelistarum*, Lib. III. c. xxv.

‡ *Hom. XXIX. in Evang.*

§ *In Marc. XVI.*

‖ *Comm. in Marc. XVI.*

¶ *In eod. loc. disp.* xlix. *sect. V.*

** *Lib. IX. c.* ix. *n.* 3.

†† *De Consens. Evang.* Lib. III. c. xxv.

‡‡ Sine dubio ejiciuntur demonia, cum eradicantur de corde peccata; exinde qui in Christum credunt linguis loquuntur novis cum jam recedunt vetera de ore eorum . . . Serpentes tollant necesse est dum venenatas suggestiones extinguunt. (*Serm. I. de Ascens.*.)—"Doubtless devils are cast out when sins are rooted out of



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Great maintain.* He reminded them that it had been necessary, as he had several times said,† that, according to the prophecies, he should die, and rise again on the third day. He commanded them to announce to all nations his death, of which they were to bear a constant testimony; he promised to send them the Holy Ghost, and finally ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the promised gift. Saint Luke writes that our merciful Redeemer eat with his Apostles,‡ and we are disposed to believe with Natalis Alexander§ and Silveira,‖ that our Divine Lord again gave the

the heart; so these who believe in Christ speak in new tongues, when their former language leaves their lips . . . They must take up serpents who extinguish envenomed suggestions."

* Qui dum bonis suis exhortationibus malitiam de alienis cordibus auferunt, serpentes tollunt; et dum pestiferas suasiones audiunt, sed tamen ad operationem pravam minime pertrahuntur, mortiferum quidem est quod bibunt, sed non eis nocebit; qui, quoties proximos suos in bono opere infirmari conspiciunt, dum eis tota virtute concurrunt, et exemplo operationis suæ illorum vitam roborant qui in propria actione titubant, quid aliud faciunt, nisi super ægros manus imponunt ut bene habeant? Quæ nimirum tanto majora sunt, quanto spiritualia; tanto majora sunt quanto per hæc non corpora sed animæ suscitantur. (*Hom.* xxix. in Evang.) —"While by their pious exhortations they take malice from the hearts of others, they take up serpents; and while they hear pestilent allurements, but are not drawn to evil, they drink indeed what is deadly, but it shall not harm them; when they see their neighbors waver in good works, and concur virtuously with them, and by the example of a good life strengthen those who falter of themselves, what do they but lay hands on the sick, that they may recover? These miracles are so much the greater as they are spiritual; so much greater as by them not bodies but souls are raised up."

† Luke xxiv. 46.

‡ Acts i. 4. From this verse and Mark xvi. 14: ("At length he appeared to the eleven as they were at table"), Commentators believe that they spoke only of Our Redeemer's last appearance to the Apostles, and that having found them at table, he eat with them as he had done formerly.

§ *In Evang. in die Ascensionis.*

‖ Multi gravi doctores hoc Christi convivium referunt ad cœleste poculum divinæ Eucharistiæ, quam Christus in hoc ultimo vale cum suis discipulis communicavit, ut dolor de ejus absentia mitigaretur, et ut eos in spe cœlestium donorum firmaret et in adversis corroboraret. (*In act. I.* 48.)

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holy Eucharist to the Apostles, to fortify them with this bread of the strong during his long absence, and to inflame them with love and hope of heavenly things.

We are aware that some critics of rare severity, who dread to admit any thing not written in the gospels, maintain that the Blessed Virgin was not present at the ascension of Christ, and that only a few saw Jesus ascend to heaven.* As we seek only the truth, we shall give the objection still greater force by adding, that few Fathers mention Mary's presence. We shall not here discuss the reasons for this silence: we shall not examine what negative value silence may have in historical facts: we shall not say that there are many things of faith of which the gospel does not speak, and which we know solely by tradition; it is enough to say that the holy Queen of Sweden † affirms that Mary was present at the ascension of her divine Son; and following the most credible mystics and writers, we shall endeavor to relate all the circumstances which attended this ascension of our Divine Lord, circumstances on which our opinion is founded. After this each may embrace what opinion he chooses.

These writers think that towards the end of the meal the Blessed Virgin came into the chamber with the other women and the disciples; who all, either because Christ had told them, or because he had manifested it in some other way, knew that he was to ascend on that day to heaven. It is impossible to give with certainty the number of happy witnesses of this resurrection, yet it is believed that there were, including the eleven Apostles and seventy-two disciples, about a hundred and twenty, as there were in the Cenacle, when Saint

* See SANDINI (*De Christo. Domino.* cap. xvi. § 12), where he speaks of those who were present at Christ's ascension.

† Ego etiam in monte, quando Dei filius, qui est et meus filius, ad Deum ascendit. (Rev. Lib. III. c. x., and Lib. IV. c. i.)

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Matthias was elected and invested with the apostleship, of which the traitor Judas had made himself unworthy.*

The garden of Olives, where Christ began his bitter passion, and where, loaded with the sins of the world, he had humbled himself so before his Father, seems to have been the place which he chose for his glorious triumph.† Our Redeemer, as mystics contemplate, and it is not improbable, went forth surrounded by a band of chosen angels, and a multitude of souls who had come forth from Abraham's bosom, and had for ages longed for this happy moment.‡ Beside Christ was his beloved Mother, who, after having been the companion of her Son's sufferings, was now the partaker of his joy and glory. Then came the Apostles, the disciples, all who had formerly followed Jesus of Nazareth. This privileged band of the faithful doubtless passed through the streets of Jerusalem, and as Silveira relates, by the divine will all the spectators were stupefied. No one had the courage to ask a question or oppose the march of this blessed procession, or inform the priests and Pharisees, and the numerous party freely left the city and followed Jesus, who led them towards Bethany. Our Lord turned his steps towards that village because it lay near the garden of Olives, or, as among others Cornelius a Lapide thinks,§ because Jesus wished to invite Martha and Mary, who were not in that happy company.

* So all affirm who comment on the first chapter of the Acts.

† Saint Luke, in the last chapter of his gospel, merely says that Jesus led his disciples towards Bethany, and, in the Acts of the Apostles, he relates that, after witnessing the ascension of Christ, they returned from the garden of Olives; hence the commentators generally believe that it was from this spot that Jesus ascended to heaven.

‡ These souls of the just who attended Christ all came from Limbo, and many rose with their bodies. Origen, Saint Jerome, Saint Thomas, without our naming many other Fathers and Doctors, believe that these latter ascended to heaven with their bodies. Others believe that they died again a little before.

§ In Luc. c. xxiv.

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We will not here recall the question which the disciples put to Christ, whether, at the time of his Ascension, the kingdom of Israel, then tributary to the Romans, would be restored to its ancient splendor, nor the reply which was made them ;* but we will briefly say that our divine Master bid them prepare with care to receive the power of the Holy Ghost, which should inflame their heart, open their understanding, render their lips eloquent, and make them heralds of his divinity, not only in Judea, but throughout the world ; then turning to his beloved Mother, he said : "O Mother,"—we quote Saint John Chrysostom,†—"peace be with thee ; be not afflicted that I return to my Father ; I will not leave thee unconsoled, who art the glory and light of the world : I will not leave thee, my spotless abode : I will not leave thee, my holy temple : I will not leave thee, who alone in the universe hast been found faithful ; I will not leave thee, O holy, incorruptible ark ; I will not leave thee, O Virgin, O my mother ! Nay more, when thou shalt leave this life, I will not send an angel, but will come myself, to receive thy soul more radiant than the Sun." These sweet words the Blessed Virgin

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* Acts i. 6.

† Vossius attributes this discourse to Saint John Chrysostom, but others deny it to be his. Be that as it may, it is of great weight from its antiquity. Saint Ildephonsus is of the same opinion (*Serm de Assumpt.*), and Saint Cyprian says: "Toties denique Maria filium audivit, non modo turbis loquentem in parabolis sed et discipulis seorsum regni Dei mysteria revelantem : vidit miracula facientem, vidit resurgentem, vidit et ascendentem, sed in iis omnibus quoties verecundissimæ Virginis vox memoratur audita ?"—"So often then did Mary hear her son, not only speaking to the multitude in parables, but in private, revealing to his disciples the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; she saw him work miracles, she saw him rise, she saw him ascend, but in all these how often is the voice of the most modest Virgin mentioned ?" Hence Trombelli does not hesitate to say : "I do not oppose this opinion, for I know it to be pious, and handed down not without some probability."

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answered with equal love : but it is not given to the human mind to relate the words of that sweet colloquy.

Thus conversing, our Divine Redeemer ascended that mountain whence every part of Jerusalem could be seen. The nearer he approached the summit, the more sweetly he spoke to his disciples, taking leave of them, according to the expression of de Ponte,* like a good father, who leaves a beloved family. Saint John Chrysostom is not alone in saying that the immaculate Mary had a private conversation with her divine Son on great and numerous mysteries; Cornelius a Lapide† with de Ponte add, that our Divine Redeemer gave the Blessed Virgin the wound of his sacred side to kiss. O what unspeakable consolation must not our Queen, our beloved mother, have derived from that kiss !

But the last moment has come when the Eternal Word must leave the earth to enter into his glory. Mary, the apostles, disciples, and all that holy company have their eyes fixed on Christ. With his brow encircled by splendid rays, full of joy and majesty, Jesus once more casts a look on all those blessed souls ; in token of love, he extends his hand to bless them all, and by his own power ascends to heaven, his face turned towards the setting sun, leaving, as a sweet and perpetual remembrance, his footprints impressed on the stone,‡ where for the last time he stood.

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* Meditation on the Ascension, mentioned by Cornelius a Lapide, *Comm. Act.* i.

† In Act i. n. 137.

‡ Adricomius (n. 192) writes, that this impression was still to be seen in his time on the mountain, and citing St. Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, he also relates that it could not be covered by the stones of the temple raised by Saint Helena.

Bede (*de Locis Sanctis*) relates, that in his time various prodigies happened on that mountain on Ascension day. His words are : " In die Ascensionis Dominicæ per singulas annos, missa peracta, validi flaminis procella de sursum venire consuevit et omnes qui in ecclesia fuerint terræ prosternere. Tota illa nocte lucernæ ardent, ut non illustrari tantum, sed et ardere mons et supposita loca videantur."—

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It is easy to imagine their admiration at this sight. They then acknowledged him as truly God, and, as Saint Luke says,* they adored him, which they had never done before, as Maldonado justly remarks, commenting this passage of the gospel; for although the apostles and disciples believed in his divinity, yet they saw him conversing in the human form with them.

Saint Augustine, explaining, with other Fathers, these words of the fifty-seventh psalm of David: "Evening, and morning, and at noon I will speak and declare," says that Jesus Christ was crucified towards evening, rose in the morning, and ascended to heaven at noon. And indeed it would seem that the heavens should have been in the height of their splendor when the Sun of Justice, encompassed by a numerous cloud of holy souls,† with so much pomp and splendor rose to glory, and at last opened to mortals the gates of heaven, closed during so many ages. The Church also ordains for this reason that the paschal candle should be extinguished at that hour on Ascension day.‡

All remained there, looking up heavenward, and could not remove their eyes from an object that constituted their delight and real felicity, when our Divine Redeemer, who had

"On Ascension day, every year after mass, a strong wind as from above prostrates all in the church, all that night tapers burn, so as not only to enlighten the mountain and neighborhood, but even give them the appearance of being on fire."

* Luke xxiv. 62. "And they adoring went back into Jerusalem."

† Speaking of those who rose with Christ, Origen, Saint Jerome, Bede, Clement of Alexandria, and others, believe that they ascended in the body to heaven. (See Saint Thomas, in 4 dist. 43. q. art. 1. ad. 3.)

‡ Saint Augustine teaches in several passages, that this feast was instituted by the apostles, and it was celebrated on the fortieth day after the Resurrection. In the fifth book of the Apostolic Constitutions, chap. xix., it is ordered to celebrate it on Thursday of the fifth week. Saint Bede relates as we have said, that tapers were kept burning in the church all night, a ceremony which has fallen into disuse. (See Benedict xiv., *de Festis.*)

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ascended to heaven by his own power, entered a white cloud marvellously resplendent, in which the angelical Doctor,* with the Fathers of the Church, beholds the power of the Father who raises and receives the Son. In fact, many say that the Eternal Father came in that cloud with the nine choirs of angels to receive the Incarnate Word. With this heavenly cortege, amid joyous canticles, Christ traversing in an instant the immeasurable space to the heavens, sat at the right hand of his Father; which, according to all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, signifies that the Son as God is equal to the Father in the possession of divine things, and that as man, he has received supreme dominion over all creatures.

The pious Saint Bernard † considers the feelings of the Immaculate Virgin, who at once desires and regrets that her Son should ascend in his glory; sometimes, in the words of the Canticles, she invites him to fly to the mountains of perfumes, and sometimes with the spouse herself, after having seen him on the high mountains of Bether, she lovingly calls him to remain by her and beatify her by a sweet look. Saint Bernard concludes by saying that the Mother of our Redeemer was at once consoled and afflicted: consoled because she saw her Son ascend in glory; afflicted because she saw herself left by him on earth.

All continued to look up to heaven, and absorbed in sweet thoughts, they could not withdraw themselves from sweet

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* In Pt. III. p. q. lvii. art. 3, speaking of this cloud: "And while they were looking, he was lifted up and a cloud received him," he answers: "At first therefore it is to be said, that Christ is said to have risen by his own power, yet was raised by the Father, because the power of the Father and the Son is the same, so too Christ by his own power ascends to heaven, and yet was lifted up and assumed by the Father."

† Cant. ii. 17.

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contemplation, when suddenly two angels in human form appeared before them in white garments,* and said to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven."

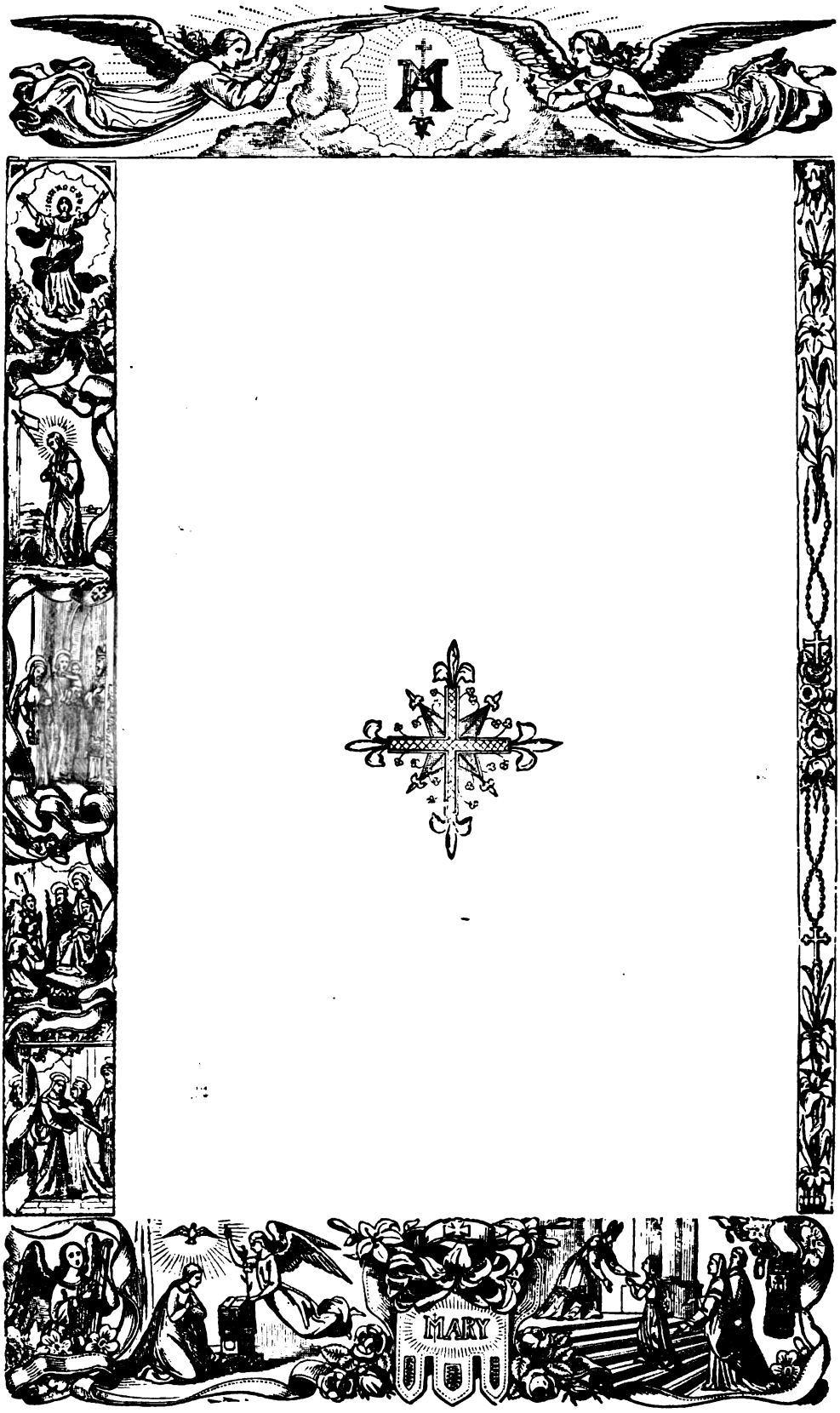
At these words they obeyed in silence, and with Mary, whom John for the first time accompanied, they returned to Jerusalem. They immediately entered the Cenacle, where, persevering in prayer, they prepared from that moment to receive the Holy Ghost, as we shall see in the beginning of the fourth book.

* In the life of Saint Francis of Rome, written by Ursinus (Bk. IV. ch. xiii.), it is stated that it was revealed to that Saint, that the two angels who then appeared were Saint Michael and Saint Gabriel.





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BOOK FOURTH.

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, FROM THE MOMENT WHEN SHE RETIRED TO THE UPPER ROOM WITH THE APOSTLES, TILL HER GLORIOUS ASSUMPTION — OF HER VIRTUES, HER POWERFUL PATRONAGE, AND THE TRUE MEANS OF OBTAINING IT.

CHAPTER I.

MARY RECEIVES THE HOLY GHOST.

WHO would not envy the happy lot of the Apostles, disciples, and all those who asembled in the upper room to receive the Holy Ghost? As we stated in the preceding book, they numbered about one hundred and twenty, or it may be even more, as we may believe from one of St. Paul's epistles.* They had constantly with them

* The apostle says (*I. ad. Corinth.* xv. 6.) that Christ, in his eighth apparition, appeared to five hundred brethren assembled: "Of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep," and we read (Acts ii. 1.) "that they were all together in one place," hence some have thought that they were more.

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the Blessed Virgin, the Immaculate Mother of our Divine Redeemer. Nor was her presence there a dream of the pious imagination; they saw her really near them, and they admired her singular fervor. Her example powerfully stimulated them to persevere in prayer.* Oh what tongue can ever tell with what respect they treated each other, with what love their hearts were inflamed for each other, and how efficacious and powerful over all was the word of our august Queen! Although they spent the greater part of the time in addressing to heaven the most fervent prayers that the Holy Ghost might descend upon them,† they must also have met for the other acts of life, while awaiting so ineffable a gift. What sobriety then in words, what frugality in meat, what solicitude to anticipate the day in singing the praises of the Lord! How all in them must have exhaled the sweet odor of the sublimest sanctity, since they had to guide and instruct them the holiest of all women, the pillar and light of the rising Church! Hence we readily believe with the pious Ludolph,‡ that to

* All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts i. 14), and as Saint Luke says: "And they were always in the temple praising and blessing God." (xxiv. 53.) Some have supposed that this upper room was in the temple, and others, that assembling at the upper room, they spent a great part of the day in the temple, thus explaining their perseverance in the temple.

† Our Lord ascended to heaven after having shown himself to his apostles for forty days, speaking to them of the kingdom of God. (Acts i. 3.) And he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the coming of the Holy Ghost; now the Holy Ghost descended "when the days of the Pentecost were accomplished." (Acts ii. 1.) They accordingly prepared during ten days to receive him. It is a constant tradition of the Church that it was on a Sunday. We will remark, as some learned writers conclude from this, that the feast of the Azymes or unleavened bread, was celebrated that year by the greatest part of the Jews, on the Sabbath, and that the Paschal Lamb was eaten on Friday. (See Du Hamel, Note on Acts ii. 1. Benedict XIV. *de Festis* c. xi. § 2.)

‡ Vita Christi II. c. lxxxii.

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all their devotions they added the mortification of fasting, since it was the custom among the Christians of the primitive Church to fast rigorously from Ascension day to Whitsunday.

One of the first and principal acts which took place in that holy assembly, was doubtless that by which the apostle Saint Peter began to exercise that supreme and sovereign power which he was to transmit to the end of time, to his successors in the episcopacy ; this was to call another to the seat of the son of perdition, of that faithless apostle who sold his divine Master, and then hung himself in despair.

We shall not stop to describe how the unanimous voice proposed Joseph, surnamed the Just, and Matthias, nor how the lot favored Matthias,* who thereupon assumed the ministry and apostleship ; we shall only say with some doctors of the Church,† that in all probability the Blessed Virgin, as mistress and directress of this new society of the faithful, convinced the prince of the apostles,‡ that the time had come for him to display that primacy of honor and jurisdiction

* Commentators give various explanations to the words of the sacred text: "And the lot fell upon Matthias. (Acts i. 25.) Saint Antoninus (pt. I. tit. VI. c. xii.) followed by many others, says that he was pointed out by a ray of light; Salmeron (tom. xii. tr. 10) likewise, followed by many others, maintains that the lot (*sors*, κλῆρος) spoken of must be understood of the ballots given in favor of Matthias. Silveira, on the authority of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Augustine, and other Fathers, thinks that the name of Matthias came forth of itself, and thus this miraculous election took place according to the prayer which they addressed to God: "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen to take the place of this ministry, and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place." (Acts i. 24–25)

† Nicolas Alberti, Comment on the Life, Doctrine, and Miracles of Christ, Pt. III. c. xxxv.

‡ Alberti (ch. xxxv.), whose authority is surely of some weight from his erudition and science.

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which Christ had given him over all the rest. There can be no doubt that the Blessed Virgin was the first to acknowledge and revere the pre-eminence of the Apostle and rejoice at it.

But it is time to relate how the Divine Spirit which quickeneth, descended visibly on the Church of Christ. Ten days had rapidly gone by in this fervent preparation, and the feast of Pentecost had already begun, a feast which among the Jews was celebrated the fiftieth day after that of the Azymes. The disciples were all together in the Upper Room, praying with the liveliest faith the Holy Ghost to descend upon the earth, when, about the close of the third hour,* the gates of heaven suddenly opened, the empyreum shone with dazzling light; a noise like a violent wind approaching, filled and shook the whole house where they were assembled. This noise was heard through the whole city; and as it seemed to come from that house, the people, surprised at the prodigy, hastened to the spot to learn the cause of it.† All were beside themselves, not with fear, but with joy. Nor had they recovered from their astonishment, when they beheld tongues of fire divide and rest on them,‡ and first of all on

* See BENEDICT XIV. *de Festis*, where he speaks of Pentecost.

† It is evident that it was the third hour after sunrise, for we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that at that hour Saint Peter preached; hence the Church says:

Dum lucis hora tertia
Repente mundus intonat,
Orantibus apostolis
Deum veniri nuntiat.

When, as the Apostles knelt
At the third hour in prayer,
A sudden rushing sound proclaimed
The God of glory near.

and she chants at Tierce: "*Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus;* and on Whitsunday at the same hour she intones the *Veni Creator Spiritus.*

‡ Here too interpreters disagree; some say that a great globe of fire appeared, which divided into as many tongues as there were persons present; others think that at first this flame was divided as it were into tongues of fire; and others

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that Blessed Virgin, who in that holy assembly occupied the most honorable seat. It seems probable that the Blessed Virgin, always privileged in all things, not only solicited that moment by her prayers as she had solicited that of the incarnation, as we have said after the Fathers, but also that in ecstatic contemplation she beheld the Incarnate Word imploring the Father to send down the Divine Paraclete, and that in spirit she joined in the prayer of her most holy Son. Whatever may be thought of this opinion, we hold for certain that Mary was filled with the Holy Ghost far more than the apostles.* The Holy Ghost did not then merely begin to abide in her, but he inflamed her more ardently, inasmuch as he did not begin in her a new work, but only continued the work long since begun.

Tears of consolation and love bedewed every eye: the rooftrees of that happy house resounded with canticles of joy; and all, already filled with faith and love, had no ambition but to preach the God whom they had seen some weeks before crucified and then rise again. Already they were inflamed with a holy desire to publish these truths and divine mysteries which had formerly seemed so obscure to their weak intelligence. Now not danger, not suffering, not prison or chains, not death itself in its most cruel form alarms them.

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finally, that many tongues rested on each, the better to symbolize the diversity of tongues which the apostles and other preachers of the Gospel were to speak; for the same gift has been accorded to many Saints, who first bore to heathen nations the name of Jesus Christ, and his holy law. Calmet (Acts ii. 3) says, that it was not a material fire, but a splendor like fire, as a symbol of the ardor and light which the Holy Ghost communicated to those happy apostles. Ursinus says (in his Life of Saint Francis of Rome, Book IV. c. xiv.) that it was revealed to that illustrious saint, that on that day, not only those assembled there, but all the just in the world were filled with the Holy Ghost, and that each received it more or less fully according to his capacity.

* *Hom. III. in die Pentecostes.*

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They look upon it as glorious to suffer the most horrible torments for the holy name of Jesus.

We cannot doubt but that one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which they received was the gift of tongues, so necessary for propagating the gospel, whether the Apostles spoke one single language understood by all, or had acquired the faculty of speaking all languages as Saint Paul says of himself, for we read in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "I thank my God I speak with all your tongues."† Both opinions find advocates: the former, however, seems the more probable, since Saint Peter's sermon was understood by all who had come from various countries to Jerusalem.‡ Did Mary receive the gift of tongues? Many doctors doubt it; the gift, they say, was necessary mainly for the diffusion of

* The commentators on the Acts of the Apostles, on the books of the New Testament, and Ecclesiastical historians, remark the great change effected in the disciples of Christ, before so ignorant and timid, to whom their divine Master's words seemed so obscure; and they note also the firmness of all those who succeeded in the apostleship or mission of preaching the word of God to the heathen.

† Acts xiv. 18.

‡ As we read in Acts ii. 9–11. "Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilias, Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." Did the Apostles speak one single language understood by all, or did they, as occasion required, speak any tongue? We cannot decide this question by the sacred text, for we may understand it in either way. "And they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (ii. 4.) "And every man heard them speak in his own tongue, and when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because every man heard them speak in his own tongue." (ii. 6.) And truly it was an extraordinary prodigy for the Apostles, speaking their own language, to be understood by men of all lands. Commentators explain this gift by saying, that as the confusion of tongues was a punishment at the dispersion of the human family (Gen. xi. 9); so, for the unity of the faith, the gift of tongues was granted in order that the faithful might be reunited in a single body.

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the gospel; now as Mary had received no such mission, the gift would have been as useless to her as to the other women, more especially as Saint Paul * formally teaches that women should not speak in the church. Yet the Angelic Doctor says that Mary received certain sublime gifts not for her use so much as for her glory; and Saint Antoninus adds, that it is a pious belief that the Blessed Virgin received the gift of tongues: for although Mary was not, like the Apostles, deputed to travel seas and oceans, or preach, nevertheless, that no spiritual good or grace should be withheld from her, it became her not to be deprived of this: "So Christ, according to the Angelic Doctor in his summa," continues the learned archbishop of Florence, "although he needed not the gift of tongues, because he preached only to the Jews, nevertheless possessed it. Nor did he possess it in vain, although he used it not, but had it for its excellence." Could this gift, then, have been refused to his holy mother, who of the purest creatures most resembles God? Besides, although the Blessed Virgin did not preach, yet it is a probable belief, not indeed written, that after the coming of the Holy Ghost, many of different converted nations and tongues hearing of the mother of Jesus God, came to visit, venerate, and listen to her words; and that she, full of charity, and incapable of erring in words, spoke, consoled, answered, instructed in the various tongues in which they were born." † It seems to us,

* "Let women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted them to speak." (1 Cor. xiv. 34.) "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection, but I suffer not a woman to teach, &c." (1 Tim. ii. 12.)

† Quia beata Maria Virgo fuit cum apostolis orans, quando receperunt Spiritum Sanctum, credendum est quod et hoc donum recepit cum eis. Quamvis non esset deputata a Deo ad discurrendum per mare aut ad predicandum sicut apostoli, tamen ut nihil boni spiritualis et gratiæ ei subtrahatur, decebat eam hoc non privari: sic nec filius ejus, quamvis non egeret habere donum linguarum quia non prædicavit

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too, that this gift became the sublimity of the Blessed Virgin, of her who was the spouse of Him who dispenses his gifts in wisdom; our Queen, encompassed by all graces and adorned with the most precious ornaments. "Let us accord to Mary," exclaimed the pious Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, on Whitsunday in the Council of Constance, "let us accord to Mary this gift as mistress of the Church; and as to the prohibition of St. Paul, a common law does not affect a privileged person, and Mary was the apostle of apostles." † Let us with Rupert, the abbot,‡ admire the graces showered on our Queen, and amid these graces manifested in her by God, such as wisdom, science, prophecy, the gift of miracles. let us also behold the gift of tongues.

But why dwell so long in proving the propriety of this gift in Mary? Was she not rich enough with all the rest, even supposing the gift of tongues withheld? The human mind is confused when it considers, even superficially, how

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nisi Judæis dicens: *Non sum missus nisi ad oves Israel*, non tamen hoc caruit, secundum beatum Thomam in *Summa*. Nec frustra ipsum habuit quamvis eo non sit usus sed ad excellentiam ejus. Præterea ipsa beata Maria, et si non prædicaret verisimiliter tamen credendum est, quamvis non scriptum sit, quod multi ex conversis et diversis nationibus et linguis audientes matrem Jesu Dei, omnes post adventum Spiritus Sancti accedebant ad eam visitandam, venerandam et audiendam. Quibus cum plena esset charitate nec in loquela posset errare, loquebatur, consolabatur, respondebat, instruebat variis idiomatibus in quibus illi nutrito et edocti erant. (Part IV. tit. xv. cxix. § 8.)

† Tertia quæstio. Amplius quærunt si donum hoc linguarum collatum est mulieribus, et Mariæ matri Jesu, sedentibus et orantibus in cœnaculo reliquis. Auget difficultatem dictum Apostoli, qui docere mulierem non permittit. Sed aliud est quod lex communa vetat, aliud quod privilegiata seu privata concedit. Itaque Maria apostolorum fuit apostola. (*Serm. de Spiritu Sancto habitus in concilio Constantiensi in die Pentecostes 7 June*, 1416.)

‡ Jure miremur quantis et qualibus deliciis affluat: deliciis gratiarum quæ manifestantur ad utilitatem, videlicet sermone sapientiæ, fide, gratia sanitatum, operatione virtutum, prophetia, discretione spirituum, generibus linguarum, interpretatione sermonum. (Lib. VIII. in Cant. Cantic.)

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abundantly the Holy Ghost poured forth his gifts into that privileged soul.* Our mind is situated as our eyes are when they have before them a horizon exceeding the reach of sight, or a light so bright as to dazzle them. Mary was filled with grace on the day of the annunciation, and from that moment, as Saint Bernard teaches,† she had, so to speak, a certain jurisdiction over all the temporal graces of the Holy Ghost. That same grace increased greatly when, as we have said, she brought forth the Son of God ; finally, on that happy day, she attained a summit which it is not given the human mind to imagine.

Although the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, after torturing their minds and wearying their imagination to find new praises, new images, new comparisons, endeavor to say something worthy of Mary, yet all confess with one voice, that they are ravished and overcome by the force and fulness of that immense river of graces. And in fact, what more sublime can be said of Mary, than to exclaim, with the same holy Doctor,‡ that she was worthy of the regard of God, from the beauty of her virtues, and worthy of the Eternal King, who, drawn by her sweet odor, chose to repose in her virginal womb ? This is not all, when we consider the extraordinary manner in which she received the Holy Ghost : if the Holy Ghost every day descends invisibly into the souls of the just

* The Blessed Virgin, besides the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, received also the fruits of those gifts, which are, as the Apostle says : charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, temperance, chastity. (See St. Thomas, III. p. q. 70.)

† Beata Virgo, a tempore quo concepit in utero suo habuit quamdam jurisdictionem, ut ita dicam in omnes temporales gratias Spiritus Sancti, ita ut nulla creatura gratiam accipiat nisi secundum dispositionem ipsius.

‡ Digna plane quam respiceret Dominus, cujus decorem concupisceret Rex, cujus ardore suavissimo ab æterno illius parentis sinu attraheretur accubitus. (*Hom.* iv. *sup.* Missus est.)

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with greater abundance as they are better disposed and prepared, who can deny that, of all those who were in the upper room, none was so well prepared as she to receive so rich and so august a guest? To cite a single comparison used by the holy Fathers, comparisons that seem bold, but are after all only feeble images, we will say that, to express how the Holy Ghost descended on that beloved spouse, they take as a similitude the universal deluge. "The waters of heaven, they say, were so abundant, that the rivers and the sea left their beds, and the whole earth was inundated; so Mary pours forth on the earth the superabundance of the graces of the Holy Ghost, to produce the fruit of faith." *

We must not then be astonished that the Seraphic Doctor † ventures to say, that God might well create a world more perfect than that which we inhabit, a heaven more vast, and adorn it with other and more splendid planets and stars almost to infinity; but that he could not make a creature greater than Mary.

She herself well knew this truth, when, notwithstanding her profound humility, at the sight of the signal gift and extraordinary graces lavished upon her, she cried out in the presence of Elizabeth: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me." ‡ She does not say what these great things

* Imbrem Spiritus Sancti in universam terram ad producendum fidei fructum cum impetu dimisit. "She sent with might the shower of the Holy Ghost upon the whole earth to produce the fruit of faith." (St. Epiphanius, *Serm. de Laud Virg.*) Saint Jerome and other Fathers echo this.

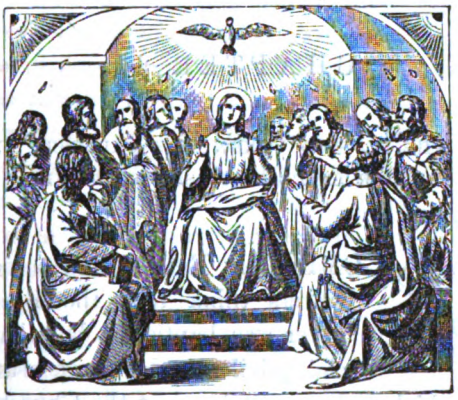
† Esse matrem Dei est gratia maxima puræ creaturæ conferibilis. Ipsa est qua majorem facere non potest Deus. Majorem mundum facere potest Deus, majus cœlum, majorem quam Matrem Dei facere non potest. "To be the mother of God is the greatest grace that can be conferred on a creature. It is one, than which God can make no greater. The Almighty may make a greater world, a greater heaven, but not a greater creature than the Mother of God." (*Spec. D. Virg. lec.* x.)

‡ Luke i. 49.

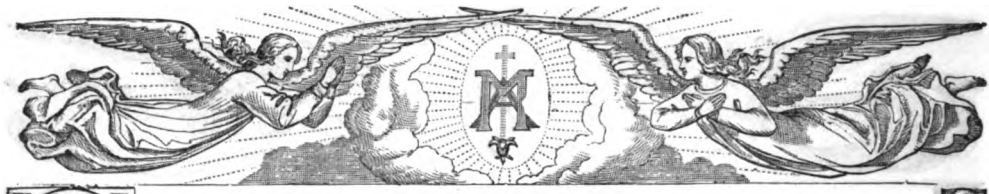
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were, because, as Saint Thomas of Villanova remarks, they are unspeakable.*

* "Non explicat quænam hæc magna fuerunt, quia inexplicabilia." "She does not explain what were these great things, because they are inexplicable." (*Concio III. de Nativ. Virg.*)



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CHAPTER II.

WHETHER THE BLESSED VIRGIN WAS BAPTIZED, AND WHAT OTHER SACRAMENTS SHE RECEIVED.



SOME Holy Fathers and some scholastic writers think that the Blessed Virgin never was baptized; but that, by a special privilege, she compensated for this sacrament, which makes us children of the Church, and without which we cannot receive the others, by the abundance of the gifts which she received from the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. To prove their position, they examine our Divine Redeemer's motives in instituting Baptism. "That sacrament, they say, is received for three reasons: to distinguish the faithful from all other men by an indelible character; to efface original sin, and that by means of actual grace, the habit of virtues may be infused into us, and that by sacramental grace we may accomplish the duties of a Chris-



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tian." * Now was the Blessed Virgin bound by any of these motives, to receive it? Was she not sufficiently distinguished from all creatures, after having been chosen by God to be the Mother of the Incarnate Word? Is she not styled by the Church, "Cause of our joy," expressly for having borne the Saviour? Could original sin be effaced in her, whom we have seen exempt from the fault of our first father from the very moment of her conception, exempt from the sting of concupiscence, and adorned with the habit of all supernatural virtues? † What new grace could she need, whom the angel saluted as full of grace?

In truth, these arguments seem, at first sight, to have considerable force, yet without derogating in the least from Mary's extraordinary sanctity, we shall briefly examine whether she was capable of the sacraments, and then which of them she received. For this purpose we shall follow especially the opinion of Saint Antoninus,‡ who, invoking the authority of Euthymius and Albertus Magnus, treats this question with great learning and ability. First, he says, although Mary had no need of receiving the sacraments,§ she

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* Tertullian, Lib. de Bapt. c. xii. St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. XX. in Act. Apost.*

† See above, Bk. I. ch. vii.

‡ Tom. IV. Summæ, tit. xv. cap. xvi. *De triplici genere gratiarum. Mariæ collat.* Henriquez, Vasquez, Suarez, Canisius, Bellarmine, and others, are of our opinion.

§ Vasquez believes too, that Mary was obliged to receive holy Baptism, in consequence of Christ's general precept: "Unless a man be born of water and the Holy Ghost." (John iii. 5.) After giving various opinions, he proceeds: Quorum sententia mihi probatur, tametsi beata Virgo neque peccatum originis commisit. Nam quamvis necessarius sit baptismus ad remittenda peccata, tamen etiam censetur necessarius ad profitendem fidem Christi et recipienda cætera sacramenta, atque ita ad consequendum regnum cœlorum. Ac proinde etiam justi homines judæi, qui a peccato originis et actionis, antequam institutum esset hoc sacramentum, erant expiati, ut consequerentur æternam beatitudinem baptizati debebant, et eo sacramento fidem profiteri. Et quamvis beata Virgo ab obligatione hujus præcepti

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nevertheless chose to receive them, to give all men a beautiful lesson of humility. She was the new Eve. Now if the mother of the human race left us a sad example of extraordinary pride, by which she wished to become equal to God, the first virtue which that wiser and better Mother sought to bequeath to her children was doubtless, as Saint Ambrose says, the virtue of humility. That spiritual mother of all carefully inculcates it in every thing ; thus we have seen her fulfil the precepts of the law instituted for sinners, as if they were binding on her. If through humility she chose to undergo the rite of Purification, and ransom her Son in the temple, how can we but believe that, impelled by the same motive, she eagerly received the sacraments instituted by her divine Son ?

Secondly, she received them for the instruction and the edification of others ; that is to say, to teach even the most perfect to observe the laws, and never exempt themselves from them, for any reason whatever. The commandment which God gave the apostles, and which they preached to the nations, was general and obligatory on all,* and it would be injurious

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libera fuisset, nihilominus baptizari voluisset, si status ipsius cum essentia et institutione sacramenti non pugnaret, sicut revera non pugnavit."—" I prefer their opinion, although the Blessed Virgin was not subject to original sin. For although baptism is necessary to remit sin, yet it is also necessary to a profession of faith in Christ, and a preparation for the other sacraments, and consequently to the kingdom of heaven. Hence even the just among the Jews, who, before the institution of this sacrament, had expiated original and actual sin, had to be baptized to attain eternal bliss, and profess faith by this sacrament. And although the Blessed Virgin was free from the obligation of this precept, nevertheless she chose to be baptized, if her state was not repugnant, as in reality it was not, to the essence and institution of the sacrament."

* Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matt. xxviii. 19.)

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to the Blessed Virgin to think merely that she did not submit to it.

"Mary," continues Saint Antoninus, "by this care and solicitude not only sought to instruct the perfect, but also to teach sinners to employ humble remedies to blot out their sins. Sinners shrink from being regarded as such: and seldom bewail their faults with the same contagious liberty with which they commit them; they repent of their faults interiorly, and blush to purify themselves. It was, then, to encourage us by her example, that our tender mother like a humble sinner received the sacraments instituted against sin. In fine, she wished to receive them from supererogation. We read in the Apocalypse, "He that is just, let him be justified still;" * and in the Proverbs † it is written, that "the path of the just as a shining light goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day." If the tepid and imperfect stop at what is absolutely necessary, careless about advancing in the narrow path of virtues, it is not so with those who aspire to the highest perfection; for they consider that the way of grace and virtue is, so to speak, infinite, and they remember these words of the apostle: "Be zealous for the better gifts; and I show unto you a yet more excellent way." ‡ They recall also these words of the Ecclesiasticus: "When a man hath done, then shall he begin," § which means that merit may always increase by new acts, by new works which endear

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* Apocalypse xxii. 11.

† Proverbs iv. 18. Saint Bernard (*Ep.* 253. *ad. Ab. Gor.*), commenting these words, says: "The just man never thinketh that he hath attained, never says it is enough; but always hungers and thirsts after justice, so that if he should live for ever, he would ever strive as far as in him lay, to be more just, ever strive to advance from good to better with all his strength.

‡ 1 Corinth. xii. 30.

§ Ecclesiasticus xviii. 6.

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us to the Lord. Now if the just endeavor to do so, what must not Mary the immaculate have done? Having, differently from her Son, received a finite though superabundant grace, she could and did advance admirably day by day in perfection by acts of virtue by which she derived a greater merit, and so pleased God more; and as the sacraments are instituted for this end, Saint Antoninus concludes that Mary received them,* although she had no need of them.

Let us now see what sacraments the Blessed Virgin received. We will in the first place say with most of the Fathers and with the same holy archbishop, that she was baptized, not to be cleansed from original sin, from which she was exempt, but to receive the character and merit which baptism confers. But as the baptism administered by St. John was only a baptism of penance, and did not confer these advantages, we affirm of Mary what Saint Augustine † writes of the Apostles, that Mary was not baptized by John. As to the silence of the Evangelists on this point, as on all that we have yet to say, we remind the reader once for all, of what we said in the last chapter of the preceding book, and conclude with the gentle Saint Bernard,‡ that the Evangelists

* Virgo igitur Maria etsi in sanctificatione sua fuerit in utero matris plena gratiæ et in conceptu felici multo magis repleta, tanta silicet quanta erat capax pura creatura, non adeo quod non potuit in ea crescere dum erat viatrix, ideo quotidie magis ac magis B. Maria in illis exercebatur, unde posset magis meritum augere et Deo placere: et ideo sacramenta sumebat etsi eis non egeret, ut magis in gratia cresceret per effectum sacramentorum."—"The Blessed Virgin then, though full of grace by her sanctification in her mother's womb, and made still replete with it in her happy conception, as much as a pure creature was capable, not so that she could not increase in it while a traveller here, so she daily practised more and more the things whereby she could acquire greater merit, and please God more; and so she received the sacraments although she did not need them, that she might, by the effect of the sacraments, increase more in grace."

† *De Consecrat.* distinct 4. *Quando* apud. S. Antoninum, ut supra.

‡ "If not a leaf from a tree, nor a sparrow fall to the earth without our heavenly

have deemed it superfluous to mention the baptism of the Blessed Virgin.

As to the time when she received it, we candidly confess that it would be difficult to say. She doubtless offered no delay, and must be numbered among the first who were baptized. It is an ancient opinion that Christ baptized only Saint Peter,* and that the latter administered this sacrament to the Blessed Virgin and the other Apostles. This is nowise repugnant to the sublime dignity of the Mother of God; the divine Master wished her with all his Apostles to be baptized by him whom he left on earth as the visible head of his Church, to which we can belong only by baptism.

The second sacrament which the Blessed Virgin received, to fulfil the commandment given by Jesus Christ, was doubtless the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.† According to St. Antoninus, whom we have several times cited already, she sought in this sacrament a more lively remembrance of the Passion of our Lord, an exercise of actual devotion, and a consolation in the absence of her divine Son. Many believed

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Father, that is by his ordination, I do not think that a superfluous word escaped from the mouth of the Evangelist, especially in the historical part."

* Nicephorus, in his History (Bk. II. ch. iii.), cites the Epistle of Evodius, entitled *Lumen*, in which it is said: "Christus manibus ipse suis Petrum tantummodo baptizavit; Petrus porro Andream et filios Zebedæi; hi deinceps reliquos apostolos, &c." In the edition of the works of Hippolytus, Bishop of Porto, annotated by Fabricius, there is a passage of Hippolytus of Thebes, extracted from a book written six centuries prior to Alexis Comnenus, where we read: "Invenimus autem in sacra scriptum quod decimo sexto anno ætatis suæ sanctissima Domina nostra Deipara salvatorem et Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum peperit, baptizata vero sit a Petro et Joanne apostolis."—"We find it written among sacred things that in the sixteenth year of her age, our most holy Lady, Mother of God, brought forth Our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, but that she was baptized by St. Peter, and Saint John, the Apostles."

† Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. (John vi. 54.)

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that she received at the hands of John, her well-beloved Son; and we do not hesitate to affirm with Vasques,* that she daily nourished her soul with the saving food. We read in the Acts of the Apostles† that the primitive Christians persevered in the doctrine of the apostles, in prayer, and in the communion of the breaking of the bread of angels. Now if it was the custom of the faithful to communicate daily, as the Holy Fathers hold, how could our dear Mother, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin, but have done so? Oh with what dispositions, with what ardent sighs and loving words she often approached the Bread of the strong! With what humility, confidence and desire she must have received that heavenly food which, as Saint Thomas shows with great force of argument,‡ is the remedy of all our evils, repose and comfort in the hardships of life, the true manna, containing in it all sweetness! O Mary! pure and immaculate Virgin, thou never thus approachest Jesus, without always returning richer in graces and spiritual consolation. Alas! it is not so with us, soiled with the mire of vice, seduced by worldly joys, blind-

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* "A sacramento altaris suscepto consecuta est dominicæ passionis rememorationem, devotionis actualis exercitationem, contra corporalem absentii Filii consolationem."—"In the sacrament of the altar she obtained a recollection of the passion of our Lord, the exercise of actual devotion, and consolation for the corporal absence of her Son."

† "De sacramento eucharistiæ, certum etiam esse debet beatam Virginem non semel atque iterum, sed frequentissime illud accepisse, tum ut servaret præceptum illius quod ipsam quoque comprehendebat, tum etiam ex devotionis affectu; ac proinde fructum illius qui est argumentum justificationis ex opere operato recepisse (V. III. part. disp. 119. n. 68.) "We ought too to hold for certain that the Blessed Virgin received the Holy Eucharist not once or twice, but most frequently, both to fulfil the commandment which included her, and from a feeling of devotion; and hence that she received its fruit which is an augment of justification, *ex opere operato*.

‡ Acts ii. 42.

§ III. part, Quæst. 20. art. 6. ad. 5.

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ed by passion, or at least defiled by the dust of a world which was ever unknown to thee! O holy Virgin. O merciful Virgin, obtain that following thy example the priests who offer the one unbloody sacrifice of the new law, and the faithful who partake of the Holy Eucharist, may all approach the holy table with a holy fear and a holy joy; and if they are not animated with the beautiful dispositions which we admire in thee, let them come at least as well disposed as possible.

Certain as it seems that the Blessed Virgin received these two sacraments, does it seem improbable to us that she received the others, for all the subtleties by which some theologians seek to prove it. In fact, what need had Mary of confirmation, if at the coming of the Holy Ghost the Blessed Virgin was confirmed in grace with the apostles? Saint Antoninus * teaches that she received his sacrament but in an extraordinary form, and without the unction. According

* In III. p. ad. quæst. 27. art. 6. disp. 119. num. 67, he speaks as follows: "De confirmationis quoque sacramento dubitandum non est beatæ Virgini sicut apostolis collatum fuisse, et virtute illius justificationis gratiæ augmentum accepisse, non quod illud sub forma consueta et unctione externa receperit sed quod in die Pentecostes cum cæteris apostolis et discipulis sub visibili forma pro sacramento confirmationis Spiritum Sanctum acceperit. Nam sicut in exordio nascentis Ecclesiæ evangelicæ hoc sacramentum sola impositione manuum conferebatur, ita etiam adventus Spiritus Sancti sub figura illa sensibili pro sacramento confirmationis beatæ Virgini et apostolis fuit; ac proinde augmento gratiæ ex opere operato, quod ipsi sacramento sub formo consueta responderet, privari non debuerunt."—"There can be no doubt but that the sacrament of confirmation was conferred on the Blessed Virgin, as on the apostles, and by virtue thereof, she received an increase of justifying grace, not that she received it in the usual way by external anointing, but that on the day of Pentecost with the apostles and disciples, she received the Holy Ghost in a visible form, instead of the sacrament of confirmation. For as in the Church at first this sacrament was conferred solely by the imposition of hands, so too the coming of the Holy Ghost in that sensible figure stood in place of the sacrament of confirmation to the Blessed Virgin and the apostles; and hence they were not deprived of an increase of grace ex opere operato, which accompanies the sacrament conferred in the usual form."

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to the angelical Doctor,* Mary received, instead of the visible unction, a correspondent unction in tongues of fire ; for, says he, "fire is nourished by oil, and the tongue represents the odor of balsam."

Still less can we say that she approached the sacrament of penance, whether, as Saint Antoninus † after Albertus Magnus maintains, she confessed that she had not merited *de condigno* the graces received ; or accused herself, as Dennis the Carthusian ‡ says, of not having sufficiently thanked the infinite Majesty of God, or not having loved him with all the love of which he is worthy. Theologians cannot admit these subtle arguments. The matter of the sacrament of penance should not be doubtful, but certain ; and the Immaculate Virgin, who never knew the shadow of even an indeliberate venial sin, could not, as the holy Council of Trent teaches, be capable of absolution. Consequently Mary could not receive the sacrament which is instituted to efface the stains of sin.§

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* Citing the authority of the Angelic Doctor, he says : Et si non fuit ibi unctio sensibilis non defuit unctio invisibilis. Nam quum B. Thomas dicat in IV. quod apostoli fuerunt confirmati in die Pentecostes, misso in eos Spiritu Sancto ad robur, ubi loco unctionis visibilis fuit ignis in forma linguarum per quamdam correspondentiam, nam oleum est fomentum ignis, et lingua correspondet balsami odori. Beata autem Maria fuit in receptione illa Spiritus Sancti cum apostolis recipiens, unde et chrismata cum eis. "If there was no visible unction, invisible unction was not wanting. For St. Thomas says, that the apostles were confirmed on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was sent to strengthen them, and therefore in the form of tongues by a certain correspondenee replaced the visible unction. Now the Blessed Virgin was with the apostles in that reception of the Holy Ghost, and of course received the graces with them." SUAREZ (tom. II. in III. par. disp. 18. sect. 3), says the same.

† Loc. supra. cit. ‡ *De laudibus Deiparæ.* Lib. III. art. 28.

§ We may here show how St. Antoninus says that the Blessed Virgin may have received Extreme Unction : "In extrema Unctione recepit victoriæ præteritæ et plenæ gloriæ significationem, et loco remissionis venialium totius doloris mortis remissionem. Et pro infirmitatis allevatione totius corporis glorificationem. Et quamvis beata Maria potuerit hoc sacramentum non suscipere exempta, per

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Finally, we have sufficiently shown that the union of Mary and Joseph was a real marriage,* but no theologian of any learning will aver that it was a sacrament. When that marriage was contracted, Christ had not come into the world, as Theophilus Raynaldus reminds us;† and when, at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee, Our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, Joseph, according to the common opinion was already dead. And moreover, who but knows that this sacrament, like all the rest, had no obligation till after the abrogation of the Mosaic law? Let no one say that the unity and indissolubility of this chaste marriage were the figure of the sacrament, and supplied for it, for this same figure could be found in all the marriages of the Jews who were not polygamists, and did not repudiate their wives.

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privilegium quod Dominus confert iis quos sine infirmitate et mortis dolore dignatus est evocare, tamen videtur quod isti privilegio suo abrenuntiaverit et sacramentum illud pro peccatoribus institutum humilitur susceperit, et humilitate, quam per totam vitam tenuerit, egressum consummaverit." "In extreme unction she received the signification of past victory and full glory instead of the remission of venial sins, the remission of all pain in death, and glorification instead of the relief of bodily pain. And although the Blessed Virgin might not have received this sacrament, exempt by the privilege which the Lord grants those whom he vouchsafes to call without sickness and the pain of death, yet she seems to have renounced the privilege, and humbly to have received this sacrament instituted for sinners, and consummated her departure by the humility which she had ever had in life." (Pars. IV. tit. xv. c. xvi. § 2.) Vasquez and many others, deny it against Suarez. (Tom II. Pt. III. disp. xviii. § 3.)

* See Book II. ch. 1.

† "Conjugium quod cum Josepho inivit Maria fuisse sacramentum et auxisse gratiam æque cætera novæ legis sacramenta quæ suscepit . . . ad eo manifeste falsem est, ut confutari non debeat; omnia enim novæ legis sacramenta sunt instituta a Christo qui tunc nondum venerat."—"That Joseph's marriage with Mary was a sacrament, and increased grace like the other sacraments of the new law which she received, is so manifestly false, that it does not deserve a refutation; for all the sacraments of the new law were instituted by Christ, who had not yet come." (Theoph. Raynald, Pt. II. See also Trombelli, Part I. dissert. xxxiv.)

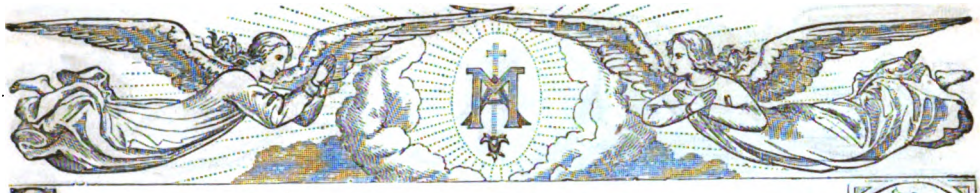
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Besides, when was the grace conferred by Christ in this sacrament promised to these marriages?

But perhaps we have dwelt too long on such questions, which are more adapted to satisfying curiosity than awakening devotion; leaving each one then to think as he will on this point, we will resume the thread of our narrative, always relying on conjectures most worthy of credit.



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CHAPTER III.

THE CLOSE OF THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.



THE maternity which, for the advantage of all the faithful, Mary received at the foot of the cross, she never ceased to exercise with solicitude during the long years which she spent on earth, as she does not, nor will ever cease to exercise it in heaven to the end of time. It is very probable that Mary continued to reside in Jerusalem, and that often, if not always, she was amid the apostles and disciples, who lived doing good and conversing of her divine Son: the happy Saint John, who doubtless sought to discharge the duties incumbent on a loving and devoted son, taking especial care of her.

If we can credit the apocryphal narrative which bears the name of Saint John, Mary resided in Jerusalem near Mount Sion. It is very easy to imagine the life she led there, although the Evangelists and more ancient authors do not speak of it. This life was what it had ever been, that is to say,



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at once contemplative and active. Besides venerating, as we shall show, the spots marked by the blood-stained steps of our Divine Redeemer, the Blessed Virgin always, whether she worked,* or took some frugal nourishment to support her failing strength, meditated the Passion of her Son, as if that remembrance was still fresh in her mind. She endeavored to rise by degrees to the most sublime virtues, although she had begun when the greatest Saints end; like the noble eagle, which in its sublime flight rises heavenward above all other birds, Mary incessantly rose day by day nearer to God; and although her life might be called all heavenly, because in thought Mary was constantly rapt up to heaven, yet she ardently desired to see God face to face, and join her Divine Son in the glory which he had gone to prepare for her. As to the active life, that is to say, in work, useful to our neighbor, she instructed the Apostles† and confessors, and strengthened the martyrs: she was the radiant mirror of virgins, the consolation of the widow and the afflicted, the wholesome monitor of those that lived in wedlock, and the perfect support of all the faithful." To all she gave wholesome counsel, and all were kindly welcomed, and strengthened in the faith by her word. Hence Saint Anselm's faithful disciple‡ does not hesitate to affirm, that it was not only useful but also necessary, that Mary should survive our Divine Redeemer for some time.

But the religion of Christ was to be ever persecuted, in order ever to triumph miraculously, and the immense number

* "Sic quoque passio sua in corde meo fixa erat, quod sive comedebam, sive laborabam quasi recens erat in memoria mea." (Saint Bridget, Lib. VI. c. vii.)

† Ascendente Filio ad suum regnum gloriosum, Virgo Maria in hoc mundo ad bonorum confortationem et errantium correctionem permanere permissa est. Erat enim magistra apostolorum, confortatrix martyrum, doctrix confessorum, clarissimum speculum virginum, consolatrix viduarum, in conjugio viventium saluberrima monitrix, atque omnium in fide Catholica perfectissima roboratrix." (*Serm. Angeli ad S. Bridg.* c. xix.)

‡ Eadmerus, *de Excellentia Virginis.*

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of martyrs was ever to be a new proof of its credibility. How was it possible that corrupt men, sullied by every vice, could voluntarily accept a law which, by declaring war on the passions, should subjugate the senses? How could an infinite number of Christians of every age, sex and condition, during more than three centuries, suffer and allow themselves to be immolated like lambs, had they not been upheld by God's grace? Our Divine Redeemer had foretold his followers that they must meet persecutions, and he had also promised to give them force to endure it; how the Divine Master's word was fulfilled, the history of the Church can tell.

In Jerusalem, after the stoning of Saint Stephen, a violent persecution arose, in which Saul displayed the greatest cruelty. He penetrated into houses, violently dragged off men and women, to hurl them into dungeons.* Thus was the new-born Church in the greatest anguish, the liveliest affliction; almost all were dispersed in the parts of Judea and Samaria, which contributed in no slight degree to diffuse the light of the Gospel, so true is it that the God of mercy ever derives good from evil. The Apostles, however, remained at Jerusalem, and Mary consequently remained there also; full of love for God, solicitude for the salvation of men, and zeal for the good of the Church,† she was afflicted at the tribulation of the faithful; she feared lest they might sink

* "And at that time there was raised a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all dispersed through the countries of Judea and Samaria except the Apostles . . . But Saul made havoc of the church, entering in from house to house, and dragging away men and women, committed them to prison. They therefore that were dispersed, went about preaching the word of God." (Acts viii. 1, 3, 4.)

† Sexto, patiebam dolorem ex tribulatione apostolorum et amicorum Dei, quorum dolor erat dolor meus, timens semper et dolens, timens ne succumberent tentationibus et tribulationibus et dolens quia verba filii mei, ubique habebant contradictionem. (Saint Bridget, *Rev. Lib. VI.* c. lvii.)

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under persecution and not have strength to resist the temptation. She suffered cruelly to see her Divine Son's doctrine, after so many shining proofs, still exposed to the most unjust and bloody contradiction among a nation which Christ had loaded with so many benefits. The goodness of Mary's heart, even better than the authority of the best writers,* induces us to believe that her prayers, in union with those of Saint Stephen, contributed to obtain the miraculous conversion of the most ardent persecutor of the Church, of Saul, who became that vessel of election, that Apostle as zealous in propagating the faith, as he had previously been in opposing and stifling it. That miracle took place, according to Baronius,† thirteen months after the death of the protomartyr; and during that time, Saul had not ceased persecuting the disciples of the Redeemer.‡

When the tempest was calmed, the Apostles at last began their mission, by bearing the light of the Gospel to all parts of the world.§ It seems to us probable that at that solemn moment, they all assembled around the Blessed Virgin, to be

* Alberti Nicolo, already cited.

† Ann. 36. c. i. In the Roman martyrology, the commemoration of St. Paul's conversion is made in these words: "Conversio Sancti Pauli apostoli, quæ fuit secundo ab Ascensione Domini anno."—"The conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, which took place the second year after our Lord's ascension.

‡ See Tirinus, in Act. ix.

§ It is not easy to determine precisely the year when the apostles, after composing the creed, dispersed to preach the gospel throughout the world. Cornelius a Lapide and Silveira (in Acts xii.), say that it was when St. Peter went to found the see of Antioch, and that St. James, the greater, went to Spain. Tirinus (in Chron. c. l.), says, that this took place twelve years after our Redeemer's death, when the second persecution was raised by Herod Agrippa. Baronius adopts this opinion, and assigns as a reason for it, that in consequence of the persecution, they were no longer safe in any part of Judea. Salmeron, Canisius, and other theologians, believe that it was in the 44th year of the Christian era, the second of the reign of Claudius, the year when St. Peter founded the Church of Rome, after having for seven years filled the see of Antioch. There are also other opinions.

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strengthened by her words, and commend themselves to her, that they might ever be assisted by her powerful protection. It is easy to imagine with what regret the Blessed Virgin parted with a flock so faithful and dear to her heart, what salutary advice she gave them all, promising ever to aid them in her apostleship. It was the Mother of God, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, who spoke; we think that she revealed to them many things concerning her divine Son of which they were unaware,* and that not only some returned to Jerusalem to see her again, but that she appeared several times to the apostles, showing them in what manner she wished to be



* Many writers of great authority, such as Sophronius, Saint Bernard, Saint Ildephonsus, and others, believe that the Blessed Virgin revealed to the apostles many things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. This should not be understood of which regard faith, as our Redeemer's public life, for they had been herein sufficiently instructed by the Holy Ghost, but of things relative to the childhood and hidden life of Jesus. In fact Saint Luke begins his gospel by telling Theophilus, that he will relate all that he had heard from eye-witnesses, "according as they have delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word." He then speaks of the birth and childhood of Jesus, things which neither he nor the apostles had seen; who could have taught them to him but the Blessed Virgin herself? Who but she was in this "the minister of the word?" And again, Saint Ambrose says (*De Inst. Virg.* c. vii.), that Saint John soars above the other Evangelists, because, as the guardian of the Blessed Virgin, he had learned of her the sublimest mysteries touching the Divine essence. (See too CARDINAL WISEMAN, Essays I. 589, &c.)

St. Bridget thus confirms it (*Serm. Ang.* c. xix): "Apostolis ad se venientibus omnia quæ de filio suo perfecte non noverant revelabat, et rationabiliter declarabat." She revealed to the apostles, and reasonably explained whatever they had perfectly understood concerning her Son.—Rupert the abbot gives a beautiful explanation (*Lib. I. in Cant.*): "An quia Spiritus Sanctus illos docuit idcirco tuæ vocis magisterio non illis opus fuit? Imo vox tua, vox illius fuit Spiritus Sancti; quidquid supplementi opus erat, vel testimonii ad confirmandos singulorum sensus quos acceperant ab eodem Spiritu, ex religioso ore tuo perceperunt."—"Was there no need of the instruction of thy voice because the Holy Ghost taught them? Nay, thy voice was the voice of the Holy Ghost himself; whatever was needed as supplement or testimony to confirm the meaning of what they had received from the same Spirit, they learned from thy religious lips."



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honored, as according to Cornelius a Lapide, she appeared to Saint James in Spain.*

We cannot affirm whether St. John remained constantly at Jerusalem with Mary, or whether, during the time that his ministry called him elsewhere, he confided her to Saint James the Less, Bishop of that city. Both opinions have their advocates; but to understand the question, it is necessary to settle well the time when the apostles left Judea to preach the Gospel. If we adopt the opinion of those who think that this occurred twelve years after Christ's resurrection, that is, according to some, after the death of the Blessed Virgin, we may affirm that the beloved disciple, never, or scarcely ever, left Mary. We shall, however, return to the subject in the following chapter, when we speak of the Blessed Virgin's age at her death.

Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus and grandson of that barbarous Herod, who ordered the massacre of the Innocents,† had been confirmed by the Emperor Caligula in the government of Judea, and had obtained the title of King, a title constantly refused to his predecessors. Impelled by his desire of ingratiating himself with the Jewish people, this ambitious and cruel prince put to death Saint James, then just returned from Spain;‡ he cast Saint Peter into prison,

* Cornelius a Lapide (in Act. xii.), relates an apparition of the Blessed Virgin in Spain; this apparition leads us to suppose that others took place. His words are: "Unde beata Virgo adhuc vivens Hierosolymæ eidem Jacobo apparuit Cæsaraugustæ, insistens columnæ, jussit que ibidem oratorum sibi extrui prædecens illam Hispaniæ partem sibi fore devotissimam."—The Blessed Virgin, still alive at Jerusalem, appeared to James at Saragossa, standing on a pillar, and ordered an oratory to be erected to her there, foretelling that that part of Spain would be very devout to her."—So speak Castro (c. xviii.), and Silveira (in Act. xii. n. 17, and in Apoc. c. xvi. 2. 318.)

† See Book II. c. xiii.

‡ Saint James's martyrdom, according to Baronius, took place in the year 44. Some fix it at a different period.

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intending to put him to death after the Pasch, and excited against the Christians a second persecution, more cruel than the first. Some, relying on an epistle from the Council of Ephesus to the Clergy of Constantinople,* believe that the Blessed Virgin then went with Saint John to Ephesus, capital of Asia Minor; a city greatly renowned for its temple of Diana, and to which people flocked from all sides, because it was a city that carried on an extensive foreign and inland trade. We can easily conceive the grief which the Church in Jerusalem experienced when Mary set out, accompanied by the beloved disciple, and escorted by a legion of angels. All who met her fell prostrate before her, dazzled by the divine light which illumined her heavenly countenance; unspeakable sweetness inundated the heart of all who saw her, even without knowing her; and this is not one of those pious and poetic exaggerations, one of those flattering images with which we love to adorn objects dear to us. In default of other proofs, it would suffice to remind the reader that Saint Dionysius the Areopagite † came from Greece, in hopes of seeing the

* We shall speak of this letter in the fifth chapter.

† The following is the letter written to the apostle. Although the works of St. Dionysius are regarded as apocryphal, and attributed to a writer in the fourth century, they are even so the testimony of an ancient author: "I confess before God, that man could not conceive what I not only with my mental, but even with my bodily eyes saw, observed, and gazed upon with my own eyes, the godlike, and above all heavenly spirits most holy mother of Jesus Christ our Lord, whom the benignity of God, and the clemency of the Saviour vouchsafed to show to me. When by John, head of the Evangelists and Prophets, who dwelling in the body on earth, shines like the sun in the heavens, I was led to the godlike presence of the most high Virgin, such an immense external divine splendor shone around and radiated more fully within, so great a fragrance of all perfumes superabounded within me, that neither the wretched body nor the soul could sustain the evidence of such beatitude. My heart failed, my mind fainted, overwhelmed with the majesty of so much glory, I call to witness the God who abode in the Virgin, had not thy doctrine, O Paul, taught me, I should truly have believed her

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Blessed Virgin. This hope made him insensible to the length and hardships of the journey. Beautiful and majestic as this philosopher represents her in his ardent imagination, sublime as was the idea he conceived of her, he did not hesitate to say, that after having been introduced to her by the beloved Apostle, he beheld her so radiant with light, exhaling so sweet a perfume, that he felt faint, overwhelmed by the majesty of her great glory, and that in the transport of his joy and admiration, he cried: "O holy Virgin, if I did not believe in thy divine Son, I should worship thee as a deity!"

But the Areopagite was not the only one who came from far countries to visit and venerate the mother of the Redeemer. If, as Lucius Dextro* attests, many came from Spain to Jerusalem to have the happiness of contemplating her, how could those who dwelt in countries bordering on Palestine but have gone, when they daily heard such marvels related of our august Queen? We accordingly readily believe that pious pilgrims came continually to her abode, and that one party no sooner left than another entered.

All these pious travellers returning home, found no words to express what they had seen, and what they had heard from the Blessed Virgin, who, as we have said, was endowed with the gift of tongues. And was not this gift useful, as we have said, to exercise a ministry, the more beautiful and useful to the Church, as it was less manifest and striking? All praised the beauty and affability of Mary, and her special power in extinguishing in those who saw her the flames of impurity; in fine, every virtue that ravishes the heart was visible in her.

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to be a God; for no greater glory of the blessed can be seen than that unhappiness which I now unhappy, then most happy, tasted."

* *In Chron. ad Ann.* 37.

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The Gospel has not, indeed, recounted the miracles wrought by her in her lifetime; yet who would deny them? Would it not be to insult her power? Is not this gift one of those which theologians call gratuitous, and with which Mary was adorned? If it was a miracle to hear her speak several languages, must she not also by frequent prodigies have confirmed the faith in those who visited her? Those who could not see the heavenly Queen, did not fail to consult her by letters, as the illustrious St. Ignatius says.*

This concourse of pilgrims and the faithful, certainly did not diminish at the time when the holiest of Virgins dwelt in the most impure city of all Asia, where the dissolute Venus had her chief worship, amid the false and lying gods. What a contrast to the eye of faith! How Mary must have suffered to see so much abomination, blindness and crime! O, while John sought to spread the faith,† how she must have endeavored by word, example, prayer, to recall that people from idolatry to the worship of the true God. She thus taught us how we should act in similar circumstances, and how we too may exercise an apostleship by diffusing the good odor of Jesus Christ, and aiding our neighbor by word and example; for there is no teaching more powerful than this.

It is believed that Saint John remained at Ephesus till the time when he was called to the council of Jerusalem. According to the ecclesiastical historians, Saint Peter was about to convoke a council, when he and all the Christians

* When we treat these questions we shall speak of the authenticity of the letters written by the Blessed Virgin.

† Although Saint John in the time of Domitian's persecution was conducted from Ephesus to Rome, and after issuing unharmed from a caldron of boiling oil, was banished to the island of Patmos, whence he returned to Ephesus after that emperor's death, yet Tellemont believes that he had previously resided in that city.

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were driven out of Rome by the Emperor Claudius. Cerinthus, according to Saint Epiphanius,* had begun to teach that the Gentiles, before becoming Christians, should prepare by circumcision, and the observation of the law of Moses. Those from Judea readily accepted a doctrine which honored them, and sought to enforce its observance. St. Paul and St. Barnabas rejected it, as the Gentiles who embraced Christianity became every day more numerous. The Apostles and priests† assembled to resolve the important question, which was warmly supported on both sides. After a long discussion, it was decided that the Gentiles converted to the true God, should not be troubled, but that they should abstain from victims offered to the idols, fornication, and the eating of blood and strangled animals.

It is probable that the Blessed Virgin returned at that time to Jerusalem ; that all the Christians saw her once more with joy ; and that she with consolation heard of the progress of the Christian faith ; there is no difficulty in admitting this ; but in spite of what Theophilus Rayneldus,‡ the pious Canisius § and others say, she did not preside at this council, for her voice was not heard, and she witnessed the decision without taking part in the discussion ; ‖ Christ did not give

* *Hæres* xxviii. St. Augustine, *In Catal. hæres.*

† Acts xv. 6. &c. As it is related that Peter, John, James, Barnabas, Paul and the priests took part in the council, and no mention made of the other apostles, it would seem that all were not present. Cornelius a Lapide in fact says: "John might be recalled from Ephesus, and Matthias, with such others as dwelt in neighboring cities." Baronius (Ann. xv. 17), and Saint Clement (*Const.* Lib. vi. c. xii.), think that all the other apostles came there, although they were in distant countries, the Lord so willing, for the defence and propagation of his holy law.

‡ *Diptych. Marian* P. I. punct. x. n. 13.

§ *De Deipara*, Lib. v. c. i.

‖ Yet so says the Abbot Rupert, that "she neither cried out, nor contended, nor was her voice heard in the streets." De Castro is also of this opinion. (*Hist.*

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the government of his Church to his Blessed Mother, but to the Apostles, and the bishops their successors. We are still less inclined to believe Carthagenus * and others, when they tell us that our Blessed Mother governed a monastery of virgins, situated on the summit of Mount Carmel. All this we can deny without in the least diminishing Mary's immense merit; what do I say? we believe that we would do the Immaculate Mary great wrong by attributing to her what does not belong to her; for as Saint Bernard wrote to the canons of Lyons, "The Queen's honor loveth judgment."

As we have remarked, we find nothing more as to the Blessed Virgin in the writings of the Evangelists and the Apostles after the coming of the Holy Ghost, and we find little concerning her in the writers who flourished in the first centuries of the Church. But is it not possible that many facts came down by oral tradition to later writers, who committed them to writing to prevent their being lost? Be that as it may, it is certain that Mary devoted the rest of her life to acts of religion, charity, and good example; but these acts are known to God alone, who beheld their singular perfection. Yet we shall endeavor to say what seems to us most probable concerning them.

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c. xix. n. 8.) Cornelius a Lapide says: "Rupert justly thinks that the Blessed Virgin, as the mistress of the apostles, defined all this question; not that she sat in council, for this did not become her sex, but that privately consulted by the apostles, she first pronounced her opinion."

* *De sacra antiquitate ordinis Beatæ Mariæ de Monte Carmelo.* Lib. I. c. i. Raynaldus and others repeat it, but see their refutation in Trombelli, Pt. I. dissert. xliv.

† Epist. 175.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S HAPPY DEATH.

RISING admirably every day from virtue to virtue, the holy Virgin had attained the highest degree of perfection which a human creature can attain; so that she was soon to pass from exile to her home, from pain to joy, from humiliation to glory, from earth to heaven. Perhaps she herself, by the desire which consumed her heart, by that holy impatience which made each instant seem an age, hastened that happy moment by praying the Lord to recall her to him. The weary pilgrim who reaches his term after a long and perilous journey, the long tempest-tost mariner about to enter the desired haven, the poor prisoner, who after long pining in fetters, sees the dawn of the day which is to restore him to liberty, are but poor, weak images of Mary's rapturous joy at the inward voice which told her of her ap-

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proaching death.* She prostrated herself on the earth, to thank God for the favors which He had so lavishly poured out upon her, and by a still more sublime effort, she from that moment elicited acts of the liveliest faith, firmest hope, and most ardent charity; so that we may say, that as a body increases in velocity as it nears the surface, so in these last days Mary multiplied acts of virtue with an ardor beyond all imagination. Rapture shone on her chaste brow; she could not govern the joy which deluged her heart; and like the warrior watching the day of his triumph, she sighed for the moment of her death.

But the pious reader will doubtless ask us how old the Blessed Virgin was at her death; for we cannot and should not suppose her to have been exempt from the universal law which condemns all men to die, although Saint Epiphanius †

* In the Revelations of Saint Bridget (Book VI. c. lxi.), we read that the ardent desire to soar to heaven at last obliged God to hear her.

† This holy Father (Hæres. lxxviii. § 2), relying on the silence of the Holy Scriptures, after citing the passages of Saint Luke (ii. 45), and of the Apocalypse of Saint John (xii. 13), which might favor both opinions, concludes thus: "Although I do not positively aver it, I neither define that she remained immortal, nor can state positively that she died. The Holy Scriptures, exceeding the grasp of the human intellect, have left it uncertain as to this beautiful and singular vessel, lest any one ascribe to it any peculiar curse of our flesh. Whether then she died we know not?" Baronius (ad Ann. xlviii. § 12 and 12) remarks that Saint Epiphanius wrote thus because he was speaking against heretics, calumniating that most holy and immaculate Virgin with the baseness of the flesh, and that he like other Fathers, in the warmth of the contest against error, fell innocently into the opposite error; though by expressing a doubt he decided nothing; and finally Baronius concluded by saying that the Catholic Church "admits no doubt as to the death of the Mother of God, but affirms that she who possessed a human nature experienced likewise the human necessity of dying." Father Serry (Exercit. lxv. §§ 2, 3), maintains the same. In fact the Church in the secret of the Mass of the Assumption, prays thus: "May the prayer of the Mother of God, aid thy people, O Lord, for though we know that by the law of the flesh she has departed hence, we feel that she intercedes for us with thee in heavenly glory." "Subveniat, Domine, plebi tuæ Dei Genitricis oratio, quam, etsi pro conditione

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expressed a doubt as to it. When, in punishment of his fault, Adam was driven from the heavenly paradise, he lost the privilege that would have rendered him immortal, as we read in the book of Wisdom.* Although Christ repaid with usury the losses of human nature, and that by means of baptism original sin is entirely effaced, yet we are subjected to temporal pains, such as, besides death, the *fomes* of concupiscence, the constant sufferings of life, the disquiets, infirmities, old age, and a thousand other evils, which made the philosophers of antiquity say that man was born not of a loving mother, but of a cruel stepmother. It does not alter the case, that the Blessed Virgin was exempt from original sin and the *fomes* of concupiscence, since Saint Augustine teaches† that Jesus Christ himself, from merely having

carnis migrasse cognoscimus, in cœlesti gloria apud te pro nobis intercedere sentiamus."—See BENEDICT XIV. *de Beatitudine et Canonizatione Sanctorum.* Lib. I. c. xlii.—*De Fest. in Assumpt.*

* For God created man incorruptible. (Wisdom ii. 23.)

† "Quia in eo erat similitudo carnis peccati, mutationes ætatum perpeti voluit ab ipsa exorsus infantia, ut ad mortem videatur etiam senescendo illa caro pervenire potuisse, nisi juvenis fuisset occisus." (*De peccatis meritis et remiss.* II. c. xxix. n. 48.) Saint Cyril of Jerusalem makes a beautiful reflection in his homily on the death of the Blessed Virgin: "Nullam e contagione peccati mortis suæ causam habuit Virgo Sanctissima, sed ex ipsis duntaxat naturæ principiis, quibus vel ante peccatum homo constabat, morti quippe suapte natura obnoxius esset ille quamvis optimus. Id vero beneficii Deus illi contulit, ut in eo nequaquam operante natura sed gratia, immortalitatem sibi conciliaret. Hoc ipsum et sanctissimæ Deiparæ contigit, quæ etsi bonis affluebat ac peccatum nesciebat vel minimum, eadem illa quæ morti addicunt hominem naturæ elementa gestabat, ac pariter subinde mortalis erat; verum eam a Deo gratiam obtinuit, ut mortem, si ita voluisset, etiamnum nunquam obiret, sed cœlo vitæ compos inferretur; hocce tamen ut prærogativa noluit." "The most holy Virgin had no cause of death from the contagion of sin, but from the very principles of nature, by which man even before sin was obnoxious to it, no matter how good he might be. God however conferred this privilege, that as long as he should follow not nature but grace, he should enjoy immortality. This too befell the Blessed Mother of God, who, though she abounded in good, and knew not the slightest sin, yet bore those ele-

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assumed the guise of a sinner, suffered from the moment of his birth all the pains of humanity, passed through the different ages of life, and would have died of old age, had he not in youth shed his precious blood for us on the tree of the cross. Holding, then, for certain, that the Blessed Virgin must have paid this tribute to weak nature, let us endeavor to determine exactly the time of her death; for opinions differ on the point, and some are not without foundation.

To proceed with order, we shall commence with those who assign to Mary the shortest life. The Blessed James of Voragine* cites a revelation of Saint Elizabeth of Sconauge, according to which the Blessed Virgin died a year and some months after the ascension of our Divine Redeemer. Baronius† seems to allude to this vision when, after citing the authority of Eusebius, who places her death in the second year, he adds, that it was so revealed. Moreover, whatever credit we give to the authenticity of this revelation, it is

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ments of nature which condemn man to death, and was in consequence as mortal as others; but she obtained this grace from God, that had she wished, she should never die, but be borne alive to heaven—a prerogative, that however, she did not seek."

* Dixit autem in ejusdam revelationibus sibi revelatum esse: Post Ascensionem Domini anno integro et tot diebus quot sunt a die Ascensionis usque ad diem meæ Assumptionis supervixi." She (St. Elizabeth) said that it had been revealed to her by the Blessed Virgin in these words: "After the Ascension of Our Lord I lived a year and as many days as intervened between the anniversary of the Ascension and my Assumption." (See CANISIUS *De Virg. Maria*, Lib. V. c. i.)

† Rursum vero cuipiam probatæ sanctitatis demonstratum cælesti visioni tradatur post annum elapsum a passione Christi et totidem dies quot incurrunt ab eo tempore usque ad decimam quintam mensis Augusti ex hac vita migrasse; sed hæc ab Ecclesia minime recepta esse noscuntur"—"Again it is said to have been revealed to one of known sanctity that she departed this life a year and the time between Ascension day and the fifteenth of August, after the Passion of Christ, but this it is known is not at all received by the Church." (*Ad annum* 48, n. 4.)

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indisputable that the Menology of Saint Basil * speaks of the death of the Blessed Virgin; and it is said that after the ascension of Christ and the death of Mary, John proceeded from Jerusalem to Ephesus to preach the gospel, and James to the twelve tribes of Israel, till the latter was arrested and put to death by Herod's order. Now if, as we have seen in the previous chapter, but few years intervened between the death of Jesus and the martyrdom of this first Apostle, it follows that Mary survived her divine Son only a short time. Hippolytus of Thebes † says, that she lived nine years. It is true that Schelestratus,‡ who gives a fragment of this same Hippolytus, reads not nine, but eleven years: and though Fabricius § republished it with some corrections, he too gives eleven years. Evodius, cited by Nicephorus,‖ maintains that she died at the age of fifty-nine. The common opinion is, that she survived twelve years, and this is the one adopted by Saint Antoninus.¶ If it is true that

* Jacobus apostolus, ex duodecim apostolis unus, frater fuit Sancti Joannis theologi, filius Zebedæi ex Galilæa. Post Domini autem Ascensionem et Deiparæ dormitionem, Joannes quidem Ephesum abiit, prædicationis munere ibi fungens; Jacobus vero, relictis Hierosolymis, duodecim tribus Israel percurrens Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum ubique annuntiabat. Quamobrem ab Herode tetrarca in Cæsarea Palestinæ urbe comprehensus, ejusque jussu gladio cæsus. (xv. Nov. p. 191. Tom I. edit. Urbini.)—"The Apostle James, one of the twelve, was brother of St. John, the Divine, son of Zebedee from Galilee. After Our Lord's Ascension, and the death of the Blessed Virgin, John went to Ephesus and preached there; but James, leaving Jerusalem, visited the twelve tribes of Israel, every where announcing our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore arrested by Herod the Tetrarch in Cæsarea, a city of Palestine, he was there put to death by the sword."

† This authority is cited by the priest Epiphanius. (See BARONIUS, *ad. ann. Christ.* 48 n. 5.)

‡ In Appendice ad Antiq. I. 513.

§ In his edition of the works of Hippolytus, Bishop of Porto.

‖ *Hist. Lib.* II. c. iii.

¶ Communior opinio est quod Maria duodecim annis supervixit post Ascensionem et sic sexagenariam obiisse (*Summa.* p. iv. tit. xv. c. lxv. Serm. II. de Assumpt.)

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Saint Dionysius the Areopagite was present at her death, she must have survived at least eighteen years.* Father Canisius, in his Life of the Virgin, assigns twenty years.† Cedrenus, Suarez,‡ Baronius,§ say that she died twenty-four years after the ascension ; that is to say, after her seventieth year. The pious Benedict XIII.,‖ after examining and discussing all previous opinions, supposes her to have died at the age of seventy-two ; Andrew of Crete¶ at eighty-two.** If, amid such a host of opinions, we may be allowed to express our own, we are inclined to believe with Saint Bridget,†† that she survived our Lord Jesus Christ fifteen years, the more especially as it is the opinion of Dennis the Carthusian‡‡ and many others. This opinion is moreover confirmed by the pious custom of the Rosary of sixty-three *Hail Marys*.§§ According to this, and what we have already related, Mary entered the temple at the age of three years ; remained there about eleven years ; married at

* He was converted by Saint Paul when he preached before the Areopagus.

† Lib. V. c. i. ‡ Pars. III. tom. II. disp. xxi. sect. 1.

§ *Martyrologium, Die* 13 *Augusti.* ‖ Serm. xcvi. de Beata Virgine.

¶ Ferunt enim, ubi ad extremam devenisset senectutem, migrasse ab humanis. (*Hom. I. de Dormit. S. Mariæ.*)

** According to the author of the work: *Ex gestis Anselmi colligitur forma et mores B. Mariæ.*

†† Postquam Filius meus ascendit ad cœlum, vixi in mundo per quindecim annos, et tanto tempore plus quantum est de festo Ascensionis ejusdem Filii mei usque ad mortem meam. (*Rev.* Lib. VII. c. xxvi.)

‡‡ *De Laudibus Mariæ*, Lib. IV. art. 7.

§§ We are aware that the antiquity of these beads is disputed, and that Father John Boniface of the Society of Jesus (*de Hist. Virg.* c. xv.), believes it to have been invented by Peter the Hermit, the chief mover of the crusade preached by Urban II. in the Council of Clermont. We readily adopt the opinion of the pious and learned Cardinal Bona, who in his Horologium Asceticum, speaks thus (ch. v. § 17): "Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, composed of sixty-three salutations, according to the number of years which the Blessed Virgin is believed to have lived, according to the more probable opinion of the Doctors."

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the age of fourteen, and lived thirty-three years with her divine Son. All agree in saying, that old age in her affected in naught the beauty and grandeur of her virginal body, in consequence of the excellent constitution with which she was endowed.

But how did she die? Was it violent or natural? Was it preceded by any malady, or did it come like a calm slumber, to close the eyes of the Blessed Virgin? More than one writer,* mindful of Simeon's prophecy,† has written that she died really pierced by the homicidal steel. We have spoken sufficiently of that prophecy, and the sense in which it is to be understood; we have shown how Mary is justly styled by the Church not only martyr, but Queen of Martyrs, so that we need not return to the point. It is also said that Mary, after having been the most faithful copy of her divine Son, should also, like him, die a violent death by the hands of men. Truly we cannot deny, that none has resembled Christ more nearly than Mary, but this resemblance is entirely in the emulation of virtues, and does not require the same kind of life and death; otherwise many Saints, although in an inferior degree, could not be called imitators of Christ, since they did not all die martyrs. Nor let it be said that Mary might at least die pierced with the sword of grief; for even if we take the word sword in its metaphorical sense, this opinion rests on no authority. With Saint Ambrose,‡ then, and Venerable Bede,§ we shall assert that

* See what is said in ISIDORE, *De Vita et morte Sanctorum*, c. lxviii., in VEN. BEDE, *in Luc.* ii., and in BARTHOLOMEW OF TRENT.

† "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (Luke ii. 35. See what we have said in Book II. ch. vii.)

‡ Nec littera nec historia docet ex hac vita Mariam corporalis necis passione migrasse; non enim anima, sed corpus naturali gladio transverberatur." (*In Luc.* 11. 61.)

§ *In Luc.*

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no history speaks of her violent death, for it is the body, and not the soul, that is struck by the natural sword.

We think it safe, too, to adopt the opinion of Suarez,* who, on the authority of the Fathers, says that Mary did not die in consequence of disease, but of the violence of her love of God, her desire to be united to him, and the ecstasy of the highest contemplation. Hence several Fathers, applying to Mary dying the words of the Canticle of Canticles,† compare her to the pillar of smoke going up from the desert, and exhaling the fragrance of myrrh, incense, and the sweetest aromatics.

It is a tradition, supported by Suarez ‡ on the authority of Saint John Damascenus, Metaphrastes, Andrew of Crete, Albertus Magnus, Saint Thomas, and many others, that the Apostles and the principal disciples witnessed her happy death. But how came they to be present? On this point the ecclesiastical writers do not agree. Some § say that they were miraculously led by an invisible hand to Jerusalem,

* "Addere tamen possumus, quamvis B. Virgo mortua non fuerit vi alicujus morbi corporalis, vi tamen amoris et ardentissimi desiderii et intensissimæ contemplationis obiisse." (Tom. II. pt. III. disp. xxi. sect. 1.) "We may add, that though the Blessed Virgin did not die by the violence of any corporal disease, yet she did by the violence of her love, her ardent desire, and her intense contemplation." Examining how this could happen, he concludes thus: "Fieri enim potest ut mens tanta efficacia et intentione in iis actibus occupetur, ut veluti destituat corpus; ita ut paulatim ejus dispositiones remittantur et deficiant, ac tandem ob earum defectum non possit anima in corpore servari."—"For it can be that the mind may be engaged in these acts so earnestly and intensely as to abandon the body, so that gradually its powers relax and fail, and at last by their weakness, the soul can be no longer retained in the body."

† Who is she that goeth up as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices. (Cant. iii. 6.)

‡ Already cit

§ Andrew of Crete, *Orat. de Dormit. Deiparæ.* Metaphrastes, Epiphanius, Nicephorus, Lib. II. cc. xxi. xxii. xxiii., and others.

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where the Blessed Virgin died, as we shall show in the next chapter. Others * think that, impelled by divine inspiration, they returned naturally to that city, and thus were not deprived of the consolation of once more beholding the Mother of God, hearing her last words, and witnessing that most enviable death; such were the privileges which attended it, and the manner in which it occurred.

And truly none of the sorrows which usually trouble the sons of Adam, and afflict the holiest souls, could at that happy moment sadden the Blessed Virgin; nothing shaded her departure; no regret for leaving earthly things, for her heart had never been set upon them; no love of parents, for she had been left an orphan in infancy; no desire of wealth, for she had always lived in poverty; no desire of honors, for she had ever aspired to live as much humbled and hidden as she was honored by the Almighty and raised above all creatures; no remembrance of sin could affect her, for she was pure and immaculate. Her thoughts, her love, her desires, were solely in God. To him alone she had referred the least actions of her life; never had she uttered a word, or breathed a sigh, which was not for God's glory, the only constant object of every action. The spirit of temptation never beset her, for Mary had been that valiant and noble woman, who had by her mere birth crushed his head;† in fine, not the slightest doubt as to her eternal salvation could ruffle her soul, for she was assured of being wafted to the glory due

* Cornelius a Lapide *in Acts.* xxi. Suarez, Baronius, Turrian, Lib. II. *adv. Magdeburg.*

† Theologians ask whether Mary was ever tempted, and Suarez (in p. III. tom. II. disp. xx. § 1), does not venture to decide the question. Some have distinguished between interior and exterior temptation, and say that, like Christ, Mary experienced this last, but never as regarded purity. (Carthag. Tom. I. Hom. xiv.)

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the great and rare virtues which she had practised in the highest perfection in the course of her long life.

The Blessed Virgin, thus prepared, displayed at the approach of death, the eagerness with which a young bride, adorned with the richest robes, crowned with rarest pearls, perfumed with the most precious odors, awaited her promised bridegroom. She was rapt in an ecstasy of love, when she suddenly beheld a heavenly messenger enter her humble cell.

Habituated to entertain angels, she recognized in that envoy of God the archangel Gabriel, who, humbly inclining* before her, said: "O Queen! woman full of grace, I am sent to thee by thy divine Son. Thy vows and desires of heaven are heard. Heaven awaits thee, and all the blessed spirits aspire for the happy moment when they shall contemplate the Mother of God. Three days more, and thou shalt pass from this valley of tears to the abode of eternal joy."

With these words, he offered her, as a sign of victory, a palm, whose leaves shone like magnificent rubies. At these

* See CEDRENUS, *Compl. Hist.*; NICEPHORUS, Book II. c. xxi.; METAPHRASTES, *in Dorm. B. M. V.* Saint Bridget relates it otherwise. Her account is: "Cum quodam die, lapsis aliquibus annis post Ascensionem Filii mei, multum anxiarer de desiderio perveniendi ad eundem Filium meum, vidi angelum fulgentem sicut antea videram, qui dixit mihi: Filius tuus, qui est Deus et Dominus noster, misit me nuntiare tibi quod tempus jam est quo corporaliter venias ad eum, ad recipiendem coronam tibi præparatam. Cui ego respondi: Numquid scis diem aut horam, qua migratura sum ex hoc mundo? Et respondit angelus: Venient amici Filii tui, qui sepelient corpus tuum. Quo dicto, disparuit angelus; et ego paravi me ad exitum, circumiens loca, more meo, in quibus Filius meus passus fuerat." (*Rev.* Lib. VI. c. lxii.) "One day, some years after my Son's ascension, as I was anxiously desiring to reach my Son, I saw a radiant angel, such as I had before seen, who said to me: Thy Son, who is our Lord and God, sent me to announce to thee that the time has come for thee to go bodily to him, to receive the crown prepared for thee. I answered: Knowest thou the day or hour when I am to leave this world? The angel answered: The friends of thy Son shall come and inter thy body. Saying this the angel disappeared, and I prepared for my departure, visiting, according to my custom, the spots in which my Son suffered.

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heavenly words, the Virgin humbled herself: she could only repeat, that she was the handmaid of the Lord, ever prepared for all that might please him.

The illustrious chief who, with a thousand prodigies, guided the people of Israel across the desert, had scarcely designated Josue as his successor, and earnestly enjoined on his nation the observance of the divine laws, when he heard the voice of God commanding him to ascend Mount Nebo,* and look upon the promised land, then to sleep a peaceful slumber; without delay he fulfils the command; immediately he prepares to mount to the lofty summit of the mountain where his bones are to repose in peace. So Mary, if it be lawful to compare her to any other, at that last moment gathered all her strength to crown her holy life by the holiest death. Full of love and joy, she announced to John her approaching end; and he in tears told the other disciples, who came to visit their Mother and holy Queen. The sad news spread over the city, and all those who followed Christ came in crowds to the house of the mother of our Divine Redeemer. Mary, from the humble couch where she lay languishing, only with the liveliest love, cast on all a sweet look; to all she joyfully relates how her divine Son, hearkening to her prayers, and deeming her no longer necessary here below, has called her to glory with him; and with a mother's love and affection she blesses and embraces them. All wept, beseeching her not to leave them yet, since she was their only joy, their only consolation on earth; Mary's heart is moved with pity, and to inspire them with courage and fortitude, she promises ever to watch over them from the abode where

* "Go up unto this mountain Abarim (*that is to say*, Of passages) unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, over against Jericho; and see the land of Chanaan which I will deliver to the children of Israel to possess, and die thou in the mountain." (Deut. xxii. 49.)

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charity dieth not, but is increased and perfected. But the appointed moment has come; the Apostles and disciples again surround Mary on her bed of death. With a faltering voice, she especially thanks Saint John for his constant care, and again exhorts all to propagate the faith; she begs them to inter her mortal remains; * and turning to the angels who came in hosts to attend her, like the spouse in the Canticles, she conjured them to lead her quickly to the holy mansions, for she languishes with love far from her beloved. She had not uttered all, when the chamber was dazzled with a bright light, and Jesus Christ filled it with his divine presence. A cry of joy burst from the lips of the dying Virgin: she welcomes her divine Son with words that it is not given the human tongue to repeat; and Christ himself, with his divine hands, nourishes her with his Sacred Body; then, while she gives way to the tenderest transports of divine love, the most radiant of the seraphim who had come from heaven to escort her glorious soul, approached her with respect, and with a dart of love pierced her heart.

Our holy Lady is dead;—one might think she slept! By the harmony with which the angelic choirs make that happy cell vocal,† by the bright light which fills it, those present raise their eyes, which they had kept fixed on the ground; they cannot check their plenteous tears; full of fear, they call upon their Mother, their Queen, but she answers

* Nicephorus, after relating what we have stated, adds that she gave two tunics to two women who dwelt with her, and had particularly assisted her. (Lib. XX. c. xii.) Some believe that these women were virgins, others that they had long been widows.

† "Hi vero qui tunc mecum erant in domo, quando tradidi spiritum, bene noverunt ex insolito lumine qualia divina tunc mecum agebantur."—Those who were with me in the house when I breathed my last, knew by the unwonted light that divine things were then done in me." (St. Bridget, *Rev. Lib. VI.* c. lxii.)

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not. They tremblingly approach her, and perceive but too well that the holy Dove, free from the fetters of this life, has soared to heaven. Cries, lamentations rise; all bend over her to kiss her feet and hands, and thus relieve their heart-rending grief.*

Thus languished and died the rose of Jericho! Thus fell that cedar of Libanus, whose summit rose to heaven! Thus the purest, holiest of creatures, the Mother of our Divine Redeemer, no longer lived on earth! Never more will open those eyes, one glance of which gave calm and serenity! Motionless, henceforth, will be those feet, that never trod but the path of virtue! No more will beat that heart, made only to love God and her neighbor! No more will that radiant sun shine upon us; deprived of such a treasure, we can but daily weep for so loving a Mother!

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* Saint John Damascenus (*de Dormitione Virg.*), Saint Andrew of Crete, Metaphrastes, and other ancient writers, describe in this way the happy death of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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CHAPTER V.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS BORNE TO THE TOMB.

IF WHEN a servant of God who has lived in great repute for sanctity, passes from this life to that of glory, his body, though consumed by the austerity of penance, and macerated by long infirmities, puts on a kind of mysterious beauty, and a majesty which attracts the crowd and fills them with admiration, what may we not believe of the Blessed Virgin! If holier corpse was never seen, shall we fear to say that death seemed

Impressed with beauty in so fair a face?

Doubtless all our Saviour's disciples who were at Jerusalem passed around that sacred bier, regarding with admiration that virginal body, and deeming it a great favor of Heaven that they were permitted to touch her hand or kiss her snowy winding-sheet. It is equally probable that a great many miracles took place. Although we cannot specify them, who

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will not believe with Saint John Damascenus,* that sight was restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, that the paralyzed walked, that sinners were converted, since similar miracles have been witnessed at the deaths of some saints?

When the magnificent temple erected to God by Solomon was completed, the Ark of the Covenant † was borne in with great pomp. The priests, richly attired, bore it on their shoulders, and all the ancients of the people accompanied it, the people following in crowds. So when the hour came to bear to the grave the sacred corpse of Mary, the Apostles took on their shoulders this sweet and precious burthen; the priests and Levites, and a great multitude of men and women, accompanied the bier. All, weeping with love, rendered this last duty to their beloved Lady, while with their chants of grief mingled the canticles of the angels from heaven as numerous as the motes that play in the sunbeam. The funeral pomp reached the mount of Olives; the sighs and groans redoubled, when, according to the Hebrew rite,‡ the immaculate body

* This account is drawn from Saint John Damascenus, who, it is known, derived it from Euthymius, Cedrenus, Andrew of Crete, Nicephorus, and others. We know that these narratives are not entirely credited by good critics; but this does not prove them false, and we must grant some authority to Saint John Damascenus, inasmuch as the Church, in the lessons of the office of the Assumption and its octave, uses the discourses of this Saint.

† Then all the ancients of Israel, with the princes of the tribes, and the heads of the families . . . and all the ancients of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark, and carried the ark of the Lord. (III. Kings viii. 1–34.)

‡ See ante Book III. ch. vii. Saint Melito, a disciple of Saint John says: "Tres autem virgines quæ ibidem erant et vigilabant susceperunt corpus beatissimæ parentis Mariæ, et laverunt illud funerum more. Cumque exuissent illam vestimentis suis, sacrum corpus illud tanta claritate resplenduit, ut tangi quidem posset pro obsequio, videri autem species ejus præ nimia luce corruscans non posset. Et nihil nisi splendor apparuit magnus. Cumque vestiissent eam lintéis et indumentis, paulatim lux illa evanuit." — "Three virgins who were there watching, took the body of our Blessed Mother Mary, and washed it in the usual mode. And when they unclothed it, that sacred body shone with such splendor, that they

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was piously inclosed in the sepulchre cut out on purpose in the valley of Josaphat.* The faithful did not depart, but remained long beside the tomb, animated by the desire of

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could touch it in reverence, but its appearance could not be seen for the dazzling brilliancy. Nothing appeared but a great splendor. And when they had clothed it in winding-clothes, that light gradually vanished." (*In Biblioth. Pat.* Tom. VII.)

* Some have said that Mary was buried on the Mount of Olives, that is to say, at Gethsemani; the error seems to come from the proximity of the places, and the fact of there being on the mountain a sepulchre believed to be the Blessed Virgin's. "So that," says Trombelli (Pt. I. diss. xxxv.), "one spot might easily be mistaken for the other, or it may be that the latter is a monument erected in honor of the Blessed Virgin by the piety of the faithful." Venerable Bede (*de Locis Sanctis*) says: "In eadem valle Josaphat Sanctæ Mariæ rotunda est ecclesia lapideo tabulatu discreta, cujus in superioribus quatuor altaria in inferioribus unum habetur in orientali plaga et ad ejus dexteram monumentum vacuum, in quo aliquando Sancta Maria pausasse dicitur."—"In the same valley of Josaphat is a round Church of St. Mary, adorned with marble slabs, which has four altars above, and below one on the east side, and at its right an empty sepulchre, where Saint Mary is said to have rested for a time." Urban II., in his discourse pronounced in 1095, in the Council of Clermont, says formally, that Mary was buried in the Valley of Josaphat. Bochart confirms it (Pt. 1. ch. vii. § 46), adding, that Saint Helena erected a church there, whereas Quaresmius attests (*Elucidat. di Terra Santa* Lib. IV. c. i.), the Franciscans come frequently and celebrate particularly the festival of the Assumption. Adricomius adds, that forty steps led down to it, and that in his time the Christians and Mussulmans visited it in crowds. In the *Revelations of Saint Bridget* (Lib. VI. c. lxii.), we read that Mary was buried in the Valley of Josaphat. We add, what will doubtless be read with pleasure, the description given in the sixteenth century by the Sicilian Aquilante Rochetti, who examined it very minutely: he says that these two tombs are in the same church, so near are they to each other. "To go to this church," says he, "you descend by a flight of sixty steps; at the foot is the church, very obscure, because it receives light only by the door, which is at the head of the steps, and by another opening or window in the vault. The length of the church from west to east is about 70 paces, and the breadth 30 paces. In the middle of the choir is the tomb of the virgin, which is 12 palms square without, and 8¾ palms long by 6¼ broad within. It is cut in the rock in the form of a square oratory, 30 feet long, broad, and high. Eighteen lamps burn constantly before it; it is adorned within with white marble, and it has two entrances or doors, each 6½ palms high, one at the west, the ordinary entrance, the other at the north. On the spot where the holy body lay is an altar of beautiful marble, near the wall, four palms high, on which Catholics alone cel-

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being near the mother of God, and ravished with that heavenly melody which filled the air. "Sleep, thou dearest of the virgin daughters of Sion; sleep eternally the sleep of the just in that happy sepulchre. The tombs of the Kings of Israel, the pyramids of the Kings of Egypt, the magnificent gardens of Babylon, the mausoleums of haughty Rome, all the wonders of the world, were never so much honored as the modest monument, where the pious faithful have enshrined thy immaculate remains. Day and night it shall be surrounded by pious Christians come to honor it: and graciously heard by thee, they will return to their far-distant homes, proclaiming the signal benefits which with full hands thou hast lavished on them."

On the authority of Euthymius, Damascenus and others, we have affirmed that the Blessed Virgin died at Jerusalem, and that she was consequently buried near that city. Yet we know that some maintain that she died at Ephesus; and, although their reasons at the first blush seem to have some foundation, we shall, with the illustrious Anthony Sandini,*

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ebrate holy mass on Saturdays, and other days at their devotion. Without it is encrusted with marble, like that of Our Lord; on three sides it is free, being attached to the rock only on one. Four of the eighteen lamps are maintained by Sicily, fourteen by other nations; each of these nations has a key of the Church; but only Catholics are allowed to celebrate mass there. The Turks and Moors have made a niche in the church before which they pray. Astonishing thing! the very infidels have a great respect for this church; many of them enter barefoot, and pray, raising their hands to heaven and pronouncing the sacred name of Mary, whom they call Mother of Jesus. After passing their hands over the marble in the holy place, they rub them over their face and beard, and then with the oil of the lamps, they anoint the head, forehead, and any part of the body where pain is felt. They pray with the greatest recollectedness." Finally, the celebrated traveller, Pietro della Valle, in his thirteenth letter written from Aleppo, says that he venerated at the Valley of Josaphat, where the torrent Cedron flows, the tomb of the Mother of God.

* Historia Familiæ Sacræ: de Maria, c. vii. § 2.

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endeavor to refute them, and thus prove the position which we have taken.

They object, in the first place, the silence of Saint Jerome, who is unsurpassed in his knowledge of holy things; for no one resided longer than he in Palestine, or more devoutly sought for every vestige of our Divine Redeemer and his Blessed Mother. Now that Saint, writing to Pammachius,* manifests the same doubt as Saint Epiphanius as to the death of the Blessed Virgin, a doubt which he certainly would not have entertained, had there remained at Jerusalem any tradition attesting that Mary died in that city. In his twenty-seventh epistle he enumerates all the spots venerated by the illustrious Saint Paula: he mentions the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, those of the twelve patriarchs, of Josue, Eleazar, son of Aaron, Eliseus, Abdias, Micheas, Saint John the Baptist; he even speaks of the tomb of Helena, Queen of Adiabene,† and is silent as to that of the Blessed Virgin. Yet that tomb would have been more important in his eyes than the other places named by him. Finally, in the book of *De Locis Hebraicis*, speaking of the garden of Gethsemani, he says that a church was erected over the site of Our Lord's agony, without mentioning the Virgin's tomb: yet on the hypothesis that Mary died at Jerusalem, this tomb could not be far from Gethsemani, and Saint Jerome would naturally mention it.

To these arguments we reply, that the silence of writers does not amount to a denial: and add with Baronius,‡ that this Epistle to Paula seems apocryphal; but it is enough to say, that if Saint Jerome does not speak of the Blessed Virgin's

* Ep. 61.

† This queen, in the time of the Emperor Claudius, during a great famine, endeavored to furnish provisions to that people.

‡ *Ad ann.* 48, § 18.

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tomb, it was that in his time that tomb had not yet been discovered. Jerusalem, in punishment of its deicide, was sacked and burned by a Roman army, and not a stone left upon a stone: now the tomb of the Blessed Virgin was covered with ruins, so that in that universal desolation, the inhabitants of Jerusalem gradually lost the remembrance of it: it is not astonishing, then, if Saint Jerome, Eusebius, Sozomen and Theodoret are silent as to Mary's tomb, since they described places as they were in their time. Yet the most illustrious tomb of all after our Divine Lord's could not long remain concealed. Cedrenus and Nicephorus relate that it was discovered soon after Juvenal, the Bishop, was transferred from the church of Ephesus to that of Jerusalem, and Baronius confirms it.* The happy tidings of this discovery soon spread, and the Empress Pulcheria, who had founded at Constantinople the magnificent church called "in Blachernis," besought her husband Arcadius to summon Bishop Juvenal to learn from him where the tomb of the Blessed Virgin was, because she wished to transfer it in great pomp to that church, and thus imitate the Empress Saint Helena, who had erected a church there. Juvenal complied, and made answer to the imperial pair that the tomb of Mary had first been discovered at Jerusalem,

* Quamobrem haud multum ante tempora Juvenalis sepulchrum illud fuisse repertum ex prædictis adducimur ut credamus. Qui enim loca illa intuiti sunt eademque fideliter descripsere, sane testantur post cladem Hierosolymitarum a Romanis illatam, sepulchrum Dei genitricis ruina propinquorum ædificiorum sic fuisse coopertum et obrutum, ut per gradus circiter sexaginta pateat ad illum locum descensus, et qui nostris temporibus illuc peregrinati sunt testantur illud in petra excisum esse."—"Hence we are led to believe that it was found not long before the time of Juvenal. Those who observed the spots, and faithfully described them, aver that after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the sepulchre of the Mother of God was covered by the ruins of the neighboring houses, so that you descend to it by sixty steps, and those who have made pilgrimages to it in our times say that it is cut out in the rock." (*Ann.* 48, c. xiv.)

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near Gethsemani, but that it was tenantless, her body having been carried to heaven. In fact, nothing was found but the winding-sheet in which the Blessed Virgin had been wrapped ;* and by order of the sovereigns, Juvenal sent it with the tomb,† and all was placed in great pomp in that church, on the day of its dedication, which was celebrated at Constantinople with extraordinary munificence and a great concourse of prelates.

We are well aware that Juvenal is accused, among other things, of having falsified history ; but it would be to the point to prove that he has deceived also in this matter. Now here he spoke of a fact happening in a large city, witnesses of which were still living. "It is not enough to affirm," says the illustrious Father Honoratus de Sancta Maria, in his beautiful *Reflections on the rules and use of criticism* † (a reply to Father Hyacinth Serry),‡ "it is not enough to affirm that Juvenal might have invented this story ; we must show that he did invent it."

Those who maintain that the Blessed Virgin died at Ephesus, make an objection which at first blush seems strong, since it is drawn from the acts of the third General Council, held in 431 at the city of Ephesus, under the pontificate of

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* Nicephorus, Lib. XV. c. xiv.

† This translation of the tomb disagrees at first sight with the account of Nicephorus and the version adopted by us; but Fiorentini, already cited, in his *Exercise* for the 5th and 18th of January, reconciles them by saying that Pulcheria transferred to Constantinople not the stone of the tomb, but the bier of Mary, the contact of which wrought the miracles of which he speaks. (See BENEDICT XIV., *De Festis.* On the Assumption.)

‡ He warmly maintained that the Blessed Virgin died at Ephesus. (*Exercit.* 65, § 15.)

§ "Non satis est ad destruendum testimonium Juvenalis dicere illum potuisse hanc historiam confingere ; hoc probandum est revera confinxisse." (*Diss. II. Art.* 5.) Consult the illustrious Father MICHAEL LEQUEN, Editor and Commentator of the works of Saint John Damascenus.

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Saint Celestine and the reign of the Emperor Theodosius. The object of this council was to define against Nestorius the unity of person in Christ, and consequently the propriety of styling Mary, Mother of God. Two hundred bishops, presided over by Saint Cyril, were convened in this council. Now these Fathers, notifying to the clergy of Constantinople of the condemnation of the impious heresiarch, say that this condemnation had been pronounced in the city where Saint John the Divine * and the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, died. They increase the force of the objection by affirming that it was not yet the custom to build churches in honor of the Saints, except in the place where their tombs were, and they conclude by invoking the authority of Pope Saint Leo, a contemporary of Juvenal, who, speaking of the most celebrated spots at Jerusalem, says nothing of the tomb of the Immaculate Virgin.

It is, moreover, easy to refute these objections too. In the first place, we remark, that in the original text of the Epistle of the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus, that sentence has no verb to determine its meaning: we read merely, "In which John the Divine and the Virgin Mary, Mother of God." † We may supply the word "died," as the opponents pretend, or any other verb that will agree with the two subjects. Labbe and Hardouin,‡ insert "dwelt;" Baronius § and Natalis Alexander || believe that we should add, "have their church;" Combefis thinks that the Fathers wish to recall to

* The name DIVINE was given to this Apostle and Evangelist, on account of the depth with which he has spoken of the WORD, and of that sublime doctrine, which he imbibed in the very bosom of the Saviour; hence he is typified by the eagle.

† Tom. III. Concil. page 547 and 562.

‡ Tom. I. page 1443 and 4135.

§ *Ann.* 44. § 29.

|| *Hist. Eccles.* Sæc. I. c. i. art. 3.

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mind the greater Church of Ephesus, which was under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and Saint John.* All these hypotheses are certainly much more probable than that of our adversaries, and offer a more natural and clearer sense. But there is more still: had the Blessed Virgin's tomb been at Ephesus, the tradition would have been preserved; how, then, could Saint Epiphanius, who died at the age of ninety, about ten years after the Council of Ephesus, be ignorant of a fact that must have been known to all, and relate that the Mother of God came to Ephesus with John? † How, then, can we reasonably believe that Juvenal would invent such a story in the presence of the sovereigns Marcian and Pulcheria, in presence of the Bishops of Palestine who were then at Constantinople, and who, in 401, met at the General Council of Chalcedon, when we may easily believe that several of these bishops were with Juvenal at the Council of Ephesus? Would they not have formally contradicted Juvenal, who must have remembered what was said in that august assembly, if really Mary's tomb was there said to be in the first church of Ephesus?

It is, moreover, at variance with historic truth, to say that in the fifth century churches were dedicated to saints only where their tombs were. It is enough to open Sozomen ‡ to see that in the time of the Emperor Arcadius, that is to say before the body of Saint Stephen was found in Palestine, there was a church at Constantinople erected in honor of

* See PAGI (Ann. 42, § 3), who citing the authority of Combefis says: "Patres intelligere sic vocatam majorem Ephesianorum ecclesiam a suis patronibus et tutelaribus."—"The Fathers meant that the great church of Ephesus was so called from its patrons and guardians."

† See ante, chapter III.

‡ *Hist. Eccles.* Lib. VIII. ch. xxiv. In Book IX. chap. vi., he relates the discovery of the body of Saint Stephen, in the time of Theodosius the younger.

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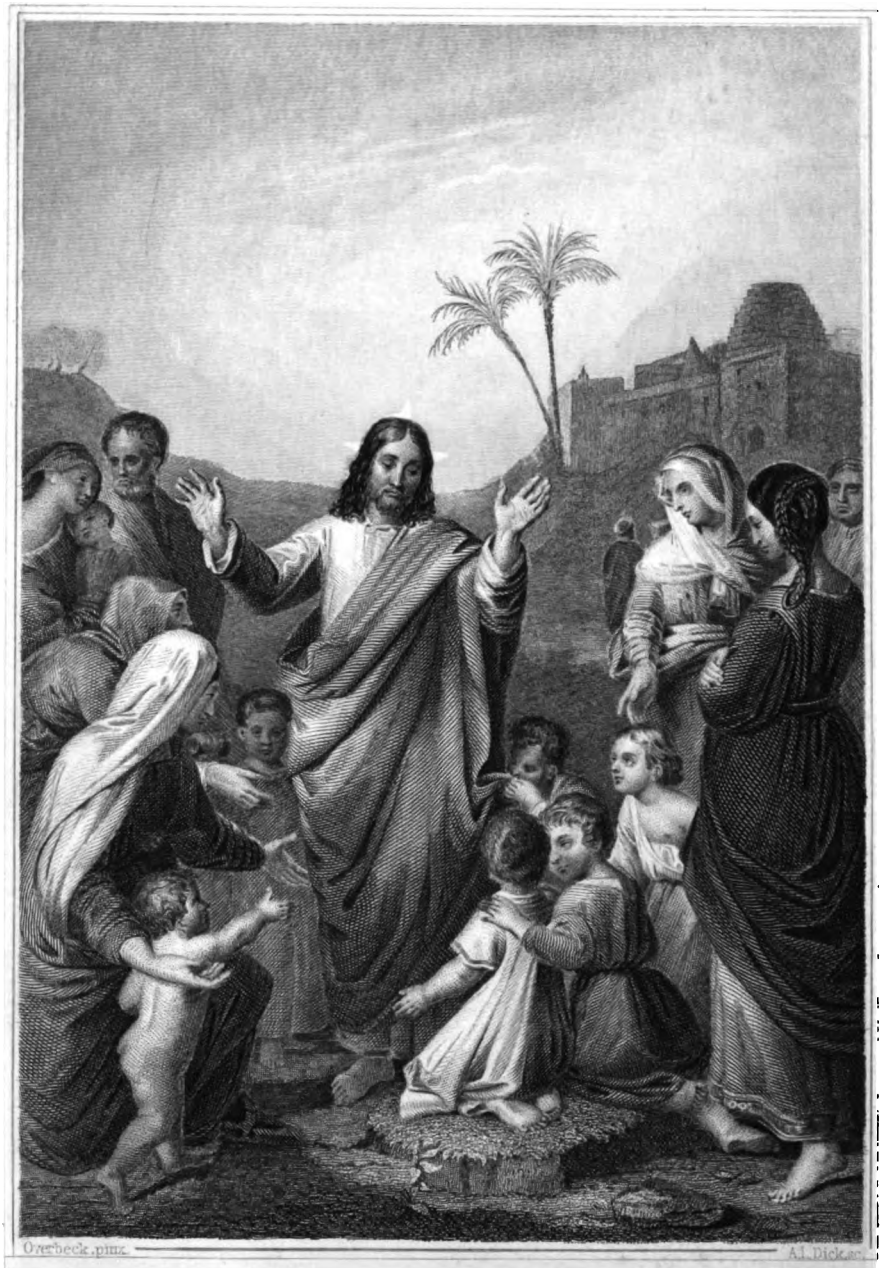
that illustrious protomartyr. There might then be a church at Ephesus dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, although only the body of Saint John was there. And might not this title have been given to the church for other reasons? Might it not have been erected in memory of the time she had spent at Ephesus, as we have said? As there was at Ephesus a church dedicated to Saint John and the Blessed Virgin, might not the fathers mean that each had a church? Do we not in the acts of the same Council find this church designated simply as St. Mary's?* If the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus intended to speak in the same manner of Mary and John, it would follow that the bodies of both were in their tombs. But that of the Blessed Virgin was, soon after her death, wafted to heaven; consequently the Bishops could refer only to the title of the church, or the sojourn which the Blessed Virgin made at Ephesus.

The objection derived from Saint Leo has no great force, if we consider the sovereign Pontiff's object in writing that epistle. He did not propose to speak of the Blessed Virgin, but only of the spots where our Divine Redeemer was born, was adored by the Wise Men, pursued by Herod, was buried and ascended to heaven, wishing in this way to prove the Incarnation. We cannot, then, from Saint Leo's silence, conclude that the Blessed Virgin was not buried in the valley of Josaphat. If any one insists on the negative argument, we will add that Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in his epistle to Pope Victor, makes no mention of the Blessed Virgin's death

* "Sancta synodus in ecclesia magna, quæ appellatur Sancta Maria, congregata."—"The holy synod assembled in the church called St. Mary's." So in an epistle to some of the clergy of Constantinople. In the report of the same council to Pope Celestine Saint Cyril wrote: "The Holy Synod held its sessions in the great church of Ephesus, called Saint Mary's." (Consult. Labbe. Tom. III. Hardouin, Tom. I.)

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Overbeck, pinx. A.L. Dick, sc.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST.

: Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not.
St MARK, CHAP. X. Ver. 14.

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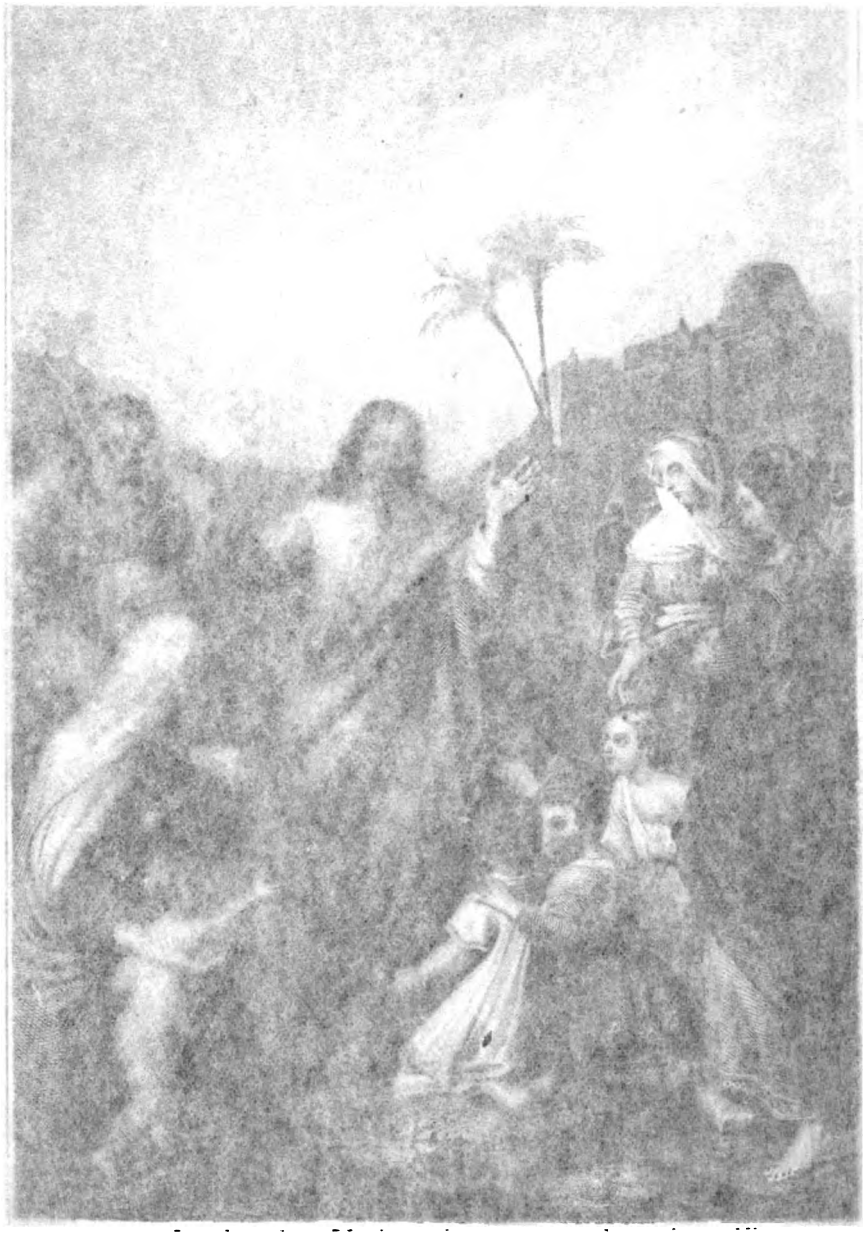
Ephesus, but also to a daughter of the apostle Saint Philip, who resided there and was inspired by the Holy Ghost.

From this discussion the reader may judge for himself, whether we have grounds for believing that the Blessed Virgin died, not at Ephesus, but at Jerusalem, as ancient writers tell us, as Juvenal confirms, and as since his time has been generally believed.





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and tomb; and yet he omits none of the glories of Asia Minor; he alludes not only to Saint John who died at Ephesus, but also to a daughter of the apostle Saint Philip, who resided there and was inspired by the Holy Ghost.

From this discussion the reader may judge for himself, whether we have grounds for believing that the Blessed Virgin died, not at Ephesus, but at Jerusalem, as ancient writers tell us, as Juvenal confirms, and as since his time has been generally believed.



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CHAPTER VI.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.



WITHOUT interrupting the acts of most perfect love * in which she was absorbed, the spotless soul of the Immaculate Mary soared to heaven, and her body was buried in the valley of Josaphat, as we have said. On the third day there arrived Thomas, the only one of the Apostles who was not present at that wonderful death. At the tidings a flood of tears bathed his cheeks; and with utterance choked by sobs, he besought his brethren to open the tomb, that he

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* Suarez, well aware that other theologians are of a different opinion, adds: "Or certainly, if any one differs, it at least follows that the Blessed Virgin passed immediately, without any intermission, from the act of love of pilgrimage, to the act of love of home."—"Vel certe, si quis sentiat esse diversum, saltem sequitur beatam Virginem ab actu amoris viæ immediate transiisse ad actum amoris patriæ absque ulla intermissione." (Pt. III. Disp. 21, Sect. 2.)

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might once more gaze upon so dear an object, and press his lips on the mortal remains of the Mother of God. The compassion excited in all by the grief of the holy Apostle, the desire of each to behold once more the privileged and revered Virgin, prevented their refusing this prayer. With the greatest anxiety and respect they opened the marble tomb. All the Apostles pressed around, but they found within only the cloths in which the body had been wrapped, and fresh, ruddy roses breathing the perfume of paradise. Amazed at so extraordinary a prodigy, astonished at the melody that resounded in the air, filled with an unknown joy, they knew not what to think ; so that they felt a vague suspicion that some jealous hand had carried off the sacred remains.* Enlightened, however, from on high, they soon thought that the earth, sullied by so many crimes, was unworthy to possess so dear a treasure. With transports of love they kissed those cloths and roses ; each sought to hold them in his hands, and fix his loving gaze upon them. Then all knelt piously around the tomb, untiringly praising the decree of Divine

* All do not agree as to the day of the resurrection of the immaculate Mary. We must first know in a precise manner the day of her death. Some martyrologies mention it on the 23d of September. This comes from adhering to the Revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Sconauge, mentioned by us in the fourth chapter, in which it is said that the Blessed Virgin rose forty days after her death. Others, relying on the Revelations of Saint Bridget (Book VI. ch. lxiii., and Book VII. c. xxvi. n. 2), say that her body remained two weeks in the tomb. "Quindecim vero diebus corpus meum jacuit in terra sepultum ;" unless instead of *quindecim* we read *aliquibus* according to Durando, Bishop of Montefeltro, in his notes on these Revelations. (See too GRETSER, *Comment. in Codinum*. Lib. III. c. x.) Cardinal Gotti (*De Christiana Religione*, Tom. IV. Pt. II. c. xli. § 3) endeavors to prove that she rose the third day. Others think that she died, was raised to life, and glorified in heaven the same day. The Universal Church seems to incline to this opinion, by solemnly celebrating on the 15th of August the memory of the death, resurrection, and glorification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (See BAILLET, Aug. 15. BENEDICT XIV. *de Festis*, where he speaks of the Assumption.)

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Providence; and not daring to divide among them, as they desired, those cloths and flowers, they replaced them in the sepulchre. Then they closed it hermetically, as they had done at first, and gradually the miracle was known: the report spread not only over Jerusalem and all Palestine, but from mouth to mouth, through time and place it has come down uninterruptedly to our days.

We continue to relate the event as narrated by Nicephorus, Saint John Damascenus and others,* without discussing whether their account is true in all particulars, whether they

* "Sacer autem ille chorus, iniquum esse judicans si ille quoque divinum Virginis matris corpus non spectaret atque complecteretur, aperiri monumentum jubet. Quod quidem ubi ita factum est, desideratum illud corpus non comparuit. Sepulcralia tantum lintea rite composita loco suo manebant, itidem ut filii quoque ejus in sepulchro relicta. Quæ et ipse et qui cum eo aderant cum veneratione exosculati, incredibilique voluptate odorisque suavitate repleti, sepulcrum quidem ad pristinum conformant modum. Miraculum autem ipsum quasi per manus subinde posteris traditum ad nos quoque transmiserunt."—"Now the sacred choir of the apostles, deeming it hard that Thomas should not see and venerate the sacred body of the Virgin Mother, ordered the tomb to be opened. When this was done the desired body did not appear. Only the sepulchral linens appeared as in her Son's tomb. Having kissed these with veneration, filled with incredible pleasure and fragrance, they closed the tomb as before. From them the miracle has been handed down from hand to hand to our day." (Niceph. Hist. Lib. II. c. xxiii.) In the menology of Saint Basil (August 15th), we read: "The most pure body of the Virgin, buried by the holy apostles, was not found on the third day. St. Thomas who had come late, opening the tomb to venerate the relics, could not find them, for God had translated whither He knows; but only the cloths were found." The same is said by Juvenal (Hist. Entich. Lib. III. c. xlvi.), by Damascenus and others. Suarez says: "Non sine divino consilio factum esse ut funeri Virginis apostolus Thomas defuerit; cumque paulo post Jerosolymam venisset, sacrum tumulum ubi corpus Virginis positum fuerit reseratum fuisse ut a sancto apostolo et videri posset et adorari; non tamen fuisse repertum, sed sola sepulcralia apte loco commodo composita, quæ et ipse, ut ait Nicephorus, et qui cum eo aderant cum veneratione exosculati, incredibilique voluptate odorisque suavitate repleti, sepulcrum quidem ad pristinum conformant locum; miraculum autem ipsum quasi per manus posteris traditum ad nos quoque transmiserunt." (Tom. II. Pt. III. disp. 21, § 2,) which is almost a repetition of Nicephorus.

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have adopted uncertain traditions, or whether they have adorned them with poetical imagery. We have already seen how reason leads us to believe that Juvenal could not have invented it; yet enlightened, intelligent criticism is needed to separate truth from fiction. We know not how the account of the Assumption began to be spread; but we affirm, certain of not erring, that the fact was solemn, and well authenticated, since it easily found credit.

Passing over this controversy, we will show how becoming to God's glory the Assumption was, and that all the faithful have believed it from time immemorial to our own days. And in the first place, we must state that the word Assumption signifies, that the Blessed Virgin, whose soul, by a special privilege, was reunited to her body, was raised to heaven, attended by angels. The glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, however, differs from the ascension of our Divine Saviour, as Saint Peter Damian remarks:* Jesus Christ, creator and master of all things, ascended to heaven by his own power, surrounded but not upborne by angels, while Mary was raised by the power of God, by grace and not by nature; and in proof of this grace which bore her, she was escorted and sustained by angels. This being so, who but sees how proper it was that Mary Immaculate should be raised in body and soul to such glory? It was required by the sublime dignity of Mother of God,† by which Mary had been established above all other creatures,‡ and rendered more

* Ascendit Salvator in cœlum potestativæ virtutis imperio, sicut Dominus et Creator, angelorum comitatus obsequiis, non auxilio fultus. Assumpta est Maria in cœlum, sed gratiæ sublevantis indicio comitantibus angelis, quam sublevabat gratia, non natura." (Consult SPINELLI *De Maria Deipara*, c. xii. n. 2.)

† See ante, Book II. ch. ii.

‡ Maria constituta est super omnem creaturam. Mary is set above all creatures. (ARNOLD OF CHARTRES, Tract. de Laud. V.)

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glorious than all heavenly spirits; * it was required by her intimate union with her divine Son, since Our Redeemer's flesh, adored in heaven by the angels and the blessed, is the very flesh of the Immaculate Virgin who conceived him by the operation of the Holy Ghost; it was required by that exact correspondence to grace, that signal sanctity, which in itself merited her a glory beyond that of all the saints in heaven. In fine, it was required by the love of Jesus towards his Immaculate Mother, who was first his tender nurse, and then his inseparable companion in all his sufferings.† If Jesus, so far as it was possible to him, honored and always exalted her on earth, how could he do otherwise in heaven? If Mary's soul was preserved from original sin, why should her body not be preserved from that corruption which is the lot of the children of Adam, doomed to return to the dust from which they were drawn? If, as is the opinion of a great many theologians, some saints who rose with Christ followed him soul and body into glory, how can we believe that Our Lord refused this favor to his blessed mother? ‡

The reasons are strong enough themselves alone to prove the truth of our position; but we may add, that this privilege was attributed to Mary by many fathers of the Greek and Latin Church. The Fathers in the first centuries seem indeed to speak rather of the assumption of the soul than of that of the body; but afterwards they speak of the latter one so confidently and authoritatively, that there can be no doubt on the point. If we inquire the motive why in the early centuries no clear mention is made of so glorious a

* "Nulla comparatione cæteris superis est gloriosior."—"She is without comparison more glorious than all other saints and angels." (St. Ephrem. *Orat. de Laud. Deip.*)

† See Benedict XIV., *Canonization of Saints*, c. xlii. n. 15.

‡ See ante, Book II. ch. x., and Book III. ch. ix.

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privilege, the reason given is clear and convincing: it was necessary that the minds of the faithful should be first imbued with the glorious resurrection of Christ, the fundamental history of our religion, a mystery above our feeble reason, and which reason at first deems impossible. Hence, although it was attested by the Apostles, and all the bishops and priests who succeeded them in the government of the church and the preaching of the gospel, the Gentiles did not yet believe it, as Saint Augustine states in his admirable book, "THE CITY OF GOD."

How could men, blinded by ignorance, idolatry and vice, believe that a humble virgin, after a retired, modest life, could be rapt to heaven, soul and body, when they were not yet convinced of the resurrection of Christ, the Son of God, who had wrought so many miracles in life and after death? This is not a simple conjecture of some pious soul, but an opinion maintained by divines, and confirmed by our Lady's revelations to Saint Bridget.*

But it is time to hear how the Fathers speak of this glorious privilege of Mary. Among the few whom we shall cite, we will give the first place to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who speaks of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, as a feast celebrated with pomp.† Commenting the words of the

* "Quia vero Assumptio mea non multis cognita fuit nec prædicata a pluribus, hoc voluit Deus, qui est Filius meus, ut prius infigeretur in cordibus hominum credulitas Ascensionis suæ; quia corda hominum difficilia et dura erant ad credendum Ascensionem ejus, quanto magis si prædicata fuisset statim in initio fidei Assumptio mea."—"That my Assumption was not known or proclaimed to many, was the will of God, my Son, in order that the belief in his Ascension might be first implanted into men's hearts; because men's hearts were hard and loth to believe his Ascension, how much more so, had my Assumption been preached in the very beginning of the faith." (*Rev. Lib. VI.* c. lxi.)

† *Hom. de dormit. B. M. V.* Hardouin, Tom. XI. Dositheus, patriarch of Jerusalem, president of the synod held in that city in 1672, invoked the same

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Apocalypse: "A great sign was seen in the heavens," he exclaims; "what is the sign which now appears in heaven, where God dwells, and the heavenly virtues are enthroned? Doubtless it is the Blessed Virgin, who, after being a great sign on earth, having conceived a God in the flesh and borne him, without ceasing to be a Virgin, is called with reason a great sign in the heaven, whither she was raised in soul and body. And although," he adds, "the immaculate tabernacle of her body was enclosed in the tomb, yet, like Christ, she ascended to heaven on the third day." Modestus, Bishop of Jerusalem,* after remarking that no penetration of mind was capable of understanding, and no force of eloquence capable of recounting the glory and privileges of Mary, concludes thus: "Wherefore, the most glorious Mother of Christ our Saviour and God, who is the giver of life and immortality, was raised to life by him, sharer of incorruptibility with him for ever, who raised her from the tomb, and assumed her to himself, as he alone knows." Saint Gregory of Tours,† who lived in the sixth century, says clearly, that the Lord commanded Mary's body, when resuscitated, should be borne with her soul to heaven, which is fully confirmed by Saint Ildephonsus of

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authority to prove against the Calvinists how becoming the privilege was to Mary.

* A translation of this Homily was first published in Rome in 1750, by Michael Angelo Giacomelli. The part cited by us runs: "Verum quænam intelligentiæ comprehensio aut dicendi vis assequi poterit, et pro dignitate laudare omnia illa sacratissima et incomprehensibilia, quæ ad ejus gloriam per eos gesta et laudibus celebrata sunt, et quæ illis divinitus revelata sunt secreta mysteria, diversaque dona distributa, et remedia innumera quibus illa tanquam sacris eos initiavit? Propterea ut gloriosissima mater Christi salvatoris Dei nostri, qui vitæ et immortalitatis largitor est, ab ipso vivificatur, consors cum eo incorruptibilitatis in omnia sæcula, qui illam e sepulcro excitavit et apud se assumpsit, ut ipse solus novit, cui gloriam et imperium, &c."

† *De gloria Martyrum.*

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Toledo,* whom in succeeding ages an ever-increasing number of Fathers follow.†

If now we pass from the Fathers to the theologians, we shall find them all of the same opinion. It will be enough to cite three who are indisputably the first of all in learning and depth. The angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas, says: "The same reason that leads us to believe that Mary was sanctified in her mother's womb, induces us to believe that she was raised body and soul to heaven."‡

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* "Nec sane illud omittere debemus quod multi pietatis studio libentissime amplectuntur eam hodierno die ad cœli palatia corporaliter fuisse sublevatam."—"Nor should we omit what many piously believe, that Mary was this day borne up to the palaces of heaven in the body." (*Serm. VI. de Assumptione B. M. V.*)

† The venerable Father Peter Canisius, already frequently cited in the fifth book of the life of the Blessed Virgin, gives a long list of Fathers of the first centuries. We must avow that this pious writer is sometimes mistaken as to works deemed authentic in his time, but which, as severe criticism has since shown, were either interpolated or falsely ascribed to those Fathers; however, the number of indisputable testimonies collected by him is exceedingly great.

‡ "Dicendum quod de sanctificatione beatæ Mariæ Virginis, quod scilicet fuerit sanctificata in utero, nihil in Scriptura canonica ponitur, quæ etiam nec de ejus nativitate mentionem fecit. Sicut tamen Augustinus in *Sermone Assumptionis* rationaliter argumentatur, quod cum corpore sit assumpta in cœlum, quod tamen Scriptura non tradit, ita etiam rationaliter argumentari possumus quod fuerit sanctificata in utero."—"Canonical Scripture is silent as to Mary's sanctification in her mother's womb, nor even mentions her birth. As, however, Saint Augustine reasonably argues in his sermon on the Assumption, that she was assumed in the body into heaven, so we may reasonably argue that she was sanctified in the womb." Although critics have since rejected as not Augustine's the sermon which in Saint Thomas's time was ascribed to him, we must observe that the angelic doctor calls its arguments reasonable. Saint Thomas often speaks of the Assumption; he speaks of it chiefly in his *Exposition of the Ave Maria*, a work ascribed to him. There, reasoning on the curses pronounced against man in consequence of sin, he says: "The third was common to men and women, that they should return to dust, and from this the Blessed Virgin was exempt, being bodily assumed into heaven. For we believe that she was raised to life after her death, and borne into heaven."

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Suarez * confirms this opinion, saying that it cannot be doubted by pious souls; and finally, the learned Cardinal Gotti † goes further, affirming that any one should be suspected of heresy and hostility to the Catholic faith, who would suspect the Church to be in error, when she proposes to the faithful universally the celebration of such a feast.

It is a very ancient one in the universal Church. It is mentioned in the Sacramentary of Saint Gregory the Great, and in the Gothic or Gallican Sacramentary, both edited by the Blessed Cardinal Tommasio, ‡ and in more ancient martyrologies, not to mention modern martyrologies, liturgies, and the manner in which this feast is now celebrated in the Catholic world. § In vain is it objected that some Fathers, speaking of the death of the Blessed Virgin, sometimes call it *sleep*, and that we read "*paused*," in the martyrology of Usuard and one other, and even in that of the Roman Church, since the Fathers, well knowing, as we have already remarked,

* In part III. quæst. 33, art. 3, disp. 21, sect. 2, dub. 1, he says that Mary's Assumption is not of faith, as the Church has not defined it, but that it is an opinion, which seems received with the authority of very many theologians, and the common consent of the faithful.

† *De verit. Relig. Christ.* Tom. IV. p. 2, c. xl.

‡ The edition appeared at Rome in 1680, and Tommasi added short but learned prefaces on the antiquity of these sacramentaries.

§ See BENEDICT XIV., where he speaks of this feast, and TROMBELLI, part 1, diss. xxxvi. This feast, which, as we have said, embraces the death, resurrection, and assumption of the Blessed Virgin, is one of the most solemn in the Church, and dates from the earliest antiquity. Some have believed it of apostolic institution. It seems more probable, as Thomassin says (*De Fest.* Lib. II. c. xx.) that it was established by the Church after the council of Ephesus. In fact, Saint Bernard, writing to the canons of Lyons (Epist. 174), says: "The Church requires us to celebrate with great veneration the day when Mary bore joy to heaven. It is preceded by a vigil and fast, which among the orientals lasted two weeks, commencing on the first of August; it was broken only on the sixth to honor the commemoration of the Transfiguration." (See BAILLET and ASSEMANI.) Pope Leo IV. instituted the octave about 847.

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the precise day when the Blessed Virgin rose, they might well call her death a sleep, the more so as in Holy Scripture and the language of the Church, we find the expression "slept in the Lord." * As to the word "pause," which expresses the time during which the body of the Immaculate Mary remained in the tomb, between life lost and life restored, who can fail to see that this expression fixes more precisely the very assumption which they seek to call in doubt? If, moreover, we admit that some Fathers and martyrologies intended to speak only of the assumption of her soul, and not of that of her body, as their words may be interpreted in either sense, we have so many authorities to set against the former, that we may reasonably conclude with Canisius,† that Mary's sleep must be understood of the assumption of her soul and body, an assumption which took place after her most holy body.

Doubtless all Christians, and particularly those devoted to Mary, (and who would not be?) would be happy to possess on

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* Many bodies of the Saints who had slept arose." (Matt. xxvii. 52.) The pagans also called death a sleep.

"Tum consanguineus Lethe sopor."

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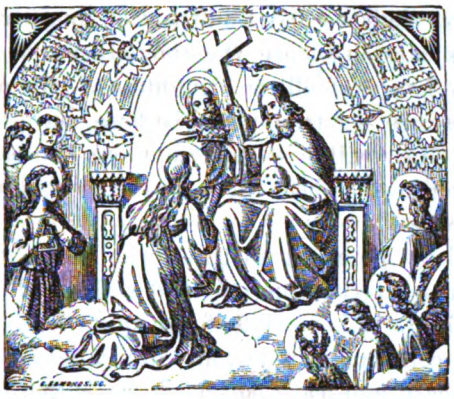
† "Secus qui sentiunt et loquuntur licet in errorem sacris litteris adversantem non impingant, tamen non sapiunt ad sobrietatem; optimis et clarissimis patribus contradicunt, a communi honorum credulitate atque confessione, quæ jam vim legis obtinet, non sine periculo sese subducunt; neque solum eximio dignissimæ Mariæ Virginis honoris derogant, sed etiam vere divinum illud miraculum quod ita corporalis matris Domini Resurrectione et Assumptione refulget, ac mirifice angelos ac pios recreat, majorem in modum enervant exte[illegible]uantque."—"Those who think and speak otherwise, although they do not fall into error at variance with holy writ, yet they are not wise unto sobriety; they contradict the best and most renowned Fathers in this common belief and confession, nor do they merely derogate from the honor of the most worthy Virgin Mary, but they enervate and extenuate that truly divine miracle, which shines forth so gloriously in the Resurrection and bodily Assumption of the Mother of our Lord, and wonderfully delights the angels and the blessed." (*De Deipara Lib. V.* c. v.)

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earth the Immaculate body of our august Queen and mother; but if Mary ascended without even leaving us her mortal remains, she does not the less entertain a tender love for us. Let us rejoice, then, that the first-born of the daughters of Sion anticipated the time of the glorious resurrection promised to all the just; and if we desire to obtain a glorious resurrection, let us pray earnestly to obtain the grace.



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CHAPTER VII.

THE GLORIFICATION OF MARY IN HEAVEN.

IN the course of this Life so dear to our heart, because it kept our eyes constantly fixed on the Blessed Virgin, we have more than once said ingenuously, that neither the mind nor tongue of man can conceive or reveal the treasures of grace with which Mary was gifted. How shall we now dare to relate the heavenly triumph of our august heroine? If the Apostle of the Gentiles, although he was endowed with the highest intelligence, the greatest eloquence, and, what is more, a divine inspiration, yet avowed that he could not state what, by a special privilege, he had witnessed with his own eyes,* how shall we, weak beings that we are, dare to recount the welcome with which heaven greeted Mary, and the glory to which she was raised?

* 1 Corinth. ii. 9. 2 Corinth. xii. 2.

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Where below shall we find similitude or imagery? Yet we cannot pass over in silence the coronation and glory of her who was the holiest of all the daughters of Adam; we shall therefore describe her triumph as best we may. The merciful heart of Mary will deign to accept our humble strain, for a mother ever loves to hear the voice of her child stammering forth her praises.

The felicity promised to those who die in the Lord, is sufficient in its very nature to render them all joyous and happy, so far as it is possible for them to be so. The soul will enjoy a consolation, a joy, an intoxication, which will fill the whole heart, and leave nothing to be desired beyond God. It will be sated when God's glory shall appear;* and this satiety will never produce, as too often happens here below, either tedium or disgust; for the souls, according to the expression of Saint Augustine,† being sated, desire, and desiring are sated. To be united, with no fear of losing, to a being so long the object of faith, hope, and love, is a felicity that cannot be expressed. God will penetrate the happy soul, just as fire in a burning furnace penetrates the atoms of the wood, but without consuming it; the soul will be like a mirror, which, placed before the sun, reflects it so well that the luminary seems multiplied in it. When the queen of Saba wished to see Solomon, notwithstanding the ideas which she had formed of his greatness, when she heheld the king's wisdom, his magnificent palace, his array of splendidly-attired servants, the abundance of his richly-furnished tables, and the number of holocausts, beside herself with amazement, she exclaimed to the king: "The report is true which I heard in my own country, concerning thy words and concerning thy

* I shall be sated when thy glory shall appear. (Ps. xvi. 15.)

† "Satiato desiderant, et desiderando satiantur." (*Tract. in* Psalmos.)

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wisdom; and I did not believe them that told me, till I came myself, and saw with my own eyes, and found that the half hath not been told me. Thy wisdom and thy works exceed the fame which I heard. Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always, and hear thy wisdom." *

And yet, what parity is there between the palace and throne of David's son, and the palace of heaven, where every one is inebriated with the torrent of inexhaustible delight.† Saint Thomas Aquinas says, that eternal beatitude consists in knowing all things that God has wrought, in loving him as a good son loves the best of fathers, in delighting in each of his infinite and impenetrable attributes, in forming with him a more intimate union than that of soul and body, in chanting his praises unceasingly with the choirs of angels, in thanking him eternally for the graces which he has granted to all creatures, and finally, in rejoicing with him at his divine beatitude, which is the object and end of all the elect.‡

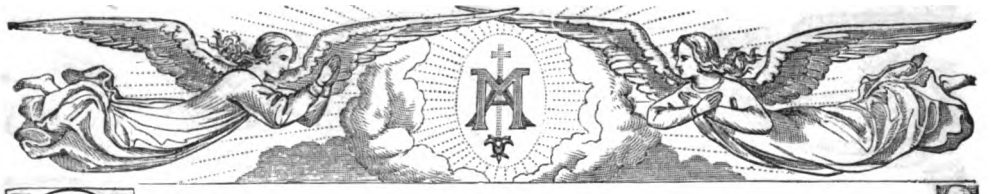
Although the possession of this felicity includes all the prerogatives usually called intrinsic, to distinguish them from those called extrinsic, and which result from the particular glory of each, yet it is of faith that the reward will not be equal for all. Each will enjoy a felicity less or greater, according to his own merits, although every act of virtue receives an immense reward. If the Lord, in his mercy, destines such a recompense to all who serve him faithfully, what must not be the Blessed Virgin's glory in heaven, since she was so rich in God's graces, and so prompt in corresponding

* 3 Kings x. 6.

† "At thy right hand are delights even to the end" (Ps. xv. 11.) "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure." (Ps. xxxv. 9.)

‡ Opusc. 63.

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to them! In the commencement of this work, we have seen with what impatient desire she was awaited by the world for forty centuries, and how God, from time to time, raised up some figure of her to console the earth.* We behold a faint likeness of Mary in the virgin Rachel, who excited Jacob's most ardent love; in the beauteous Judith, who so manfully cut off the head of the haughty Holophernes; in the chaste and winning Esther, who obtained of her spouse Assuerus, the pardon and salvation of the people of Israel. Then, considering the work of grace in that privileged soul, we showed the Eternal beholding her with complacency in his own mind before the creation of the world. Without repeating what we have already said, we shall remark, by the way, how aptly the Church applies to Mary the passage in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Book of Ecclesiasticus. It is certain, that when God conceived the admirable design of the creation, and resolved to form man, he foresaw man's fall, and the way in which he himself, in his infinite mercy, should raise that fallen creature. Now, as such was the chief end of the incarnation of the Eternal Word, it happened by a legitimate consequence that the predestination of the mother took place at the same time, since in her virginal womb, in the fulness of time, the Redeemer was to put on our flesh, by raising human nature to himself, in the indivisible unity of his person. Hence the diffusion of light, wisdom, graces of the Holy Ghost, with which the most illustrious saints of the Old and New Testament were enriched, are naught, compared to the abundance with which the Blessed Virgin was enriched from the very moment of her conception.

Unlike the slothful, avaricious servant who buried in the earth the talent confided to him, Mary never left for a mo-

* See Book I., chapters I. to V., inclusive.



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ment unproductive the rich treasure confided to her, but made it grow and bear fruit more and more, by corresponding to grace by the most exact, faithful, and efficacious co-operation. If, then, in the kingdom of heaven, glory is proportioned to virtue; if the Almighty crowns his own gifts the more worthily and gloriously as the soul has more faithfully corresponded to them, what must not be the glory of Mary, who, to the greatest sanctity, adds the august title of Mother of God! In heaven, the Prophets no longer prophesy, the Apostles no longer preach the gospel, the martyrs no longer shed their blood to confirm the faith; John has ceased to be the precursor of Christ; Joseph no longer exercises the glorious office of reputed father and guardian of the Incarnate Word; but Mary's maternity is never lost, and the Virgin will never cease to possess that august quality, which is inseparable from herself. God, then, has used in heaven all his care to make Mary, his holy Mother, revered and honored by all; consequently, since in heaven all the orders of angels and saints are divided into three hierarchies, Mary, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, constitutes one which is after God, and above all others.* The Church, too, chants that Mary has been raised above all the choirs of angels,† and, according to the Abbot William, she sees nothing above her except her divine Son.‡

After having thus spoken in general of the glory of the saints, speaking of that of our august Lady, it seems that we

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* Quæst. 108.

† "Exaltata est sancta Dei Genitrix supere horos angelorum ad cœlestia regna."—"The holy Mother of God has been exalted above the choirs of angels to the heavenly kingdoms."

‡ "Matrem, dico, exaltatam super choros Angelorum, ut nihil contempletur super se mater nisi Filium suum." (*Serm. IV. in Assumpt.*)

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should leave each to imagine it, after all we have said from the holy Fathers and Doctors. Yet, in some measure to satisfy the reader's pious curiosity, we shall endeavor to describe, or rather, as painters say, to make a rough sketch, of Mary's glorious triumph.

All the court of heaven were consumed with the desire of contemplating and honoring the virginal body, which had been the ark and tabernacle of a God ; * and all continually addressed prayers to God that he would hasten Mary's triumph.†

Three days after her most holy body had been laid in the tomb, it was reunited to the soul by the power of the Most High, and she came forth more beautiful and resplendent than can be imagined.‡

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* Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified." (Ps. cxxxi. 8.)

† Ascendat etiam Maria tua sanctissima Mater, tui conceptione sanctificata."—"Let thy most holy Mother Mary, sanctified in thy conception, ascend." (ST. BERNARDINE of Sienna, *on the Assumption.*)

‡ Chiabrera, the swan of Savona, thus describes Mary's Assumption, in his Feasts of the Christian year :

Mine is the task the faithful heart to tell,
How Mary rose triumphant to the skies.
But who will aid my muse, my mind impel,
To unfold the Assumption's glory to their eyes.
When from the tomb, which by a stern decree
Her radiant form received, recalled she rose
O'er angel choirs by God's behest set free,
She mounts in glory, flinging as she goes,
From snowy robes, from azure mantle's folds,
A sea of purple rays and crimson blent with gold.

Around her virgin brow effulgent shone
A coronal entwined by heaven's own hand,
Twelve stars her head adorn, not one outdone
In glory by the sun of morning land,
As rising, he prepares to run his way ;
Or when what time he meets the lion's sign,
O'er parched fields he pours his noontide ray ;
Or when, where living clouds his calm decline,
Soothe with the splendors of unnumbered hues,
And evening tints a holy joy diffuse.

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Adorned with white veils, which, floating around her, rendered her still more beautiful, encompassed in an azure mantle, her loose hair streaming over her shoulders, and her feet in golden sandals, the Blessed Virgin stands, her hands clasped on her breast, her eyes raised to heaven. Angels selected from the choirs of heaven stand before her in respect, forming three legions. The most favored are to bear the precious burden on their wings, overlaid like a splendid buckler; others, surrounding her on every side, guard her, as did the threescore valiant ones of Israel the couch where Solomon reposed.* The last, divided into several choirs, make the air melodious with new canticles. "Open!" they cry; "be opened, ye everlasting doors: behold, the Queen of glory: behold the Virgin, who, immaculate from the first instant of her conception, crushed the demon's haughty head. She is the blooming rod of Jesse, on which the Spirit of God reposes. She is the happy ark that floated fearless over the

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Where'er she treads the rich celestial plain,
The angel legions bow; the banners lower;
The golden trumpet blows, while forth their strain,
The emerald harp and lyre melodious pour.
Her name beloved, resounds on every side,
And fills with music the celestial mount;
The blessed her triumph hymn in glorious tide—
The mountain cedar, she; the sealed fount,
The chosen myrrh, its fragrance scattering wide,
The plane tree by the stream—the aurora in its pride.

Amid this concert pure, she soars aloft,
Borne up by power divine, and as she speeds,
The air has purer grown, the heavens more soft,
Each planet brighter, as his gaze he feeds
On that all-dazzling form.—But whither bold,
Vain tongue wouldst thou presume? Thy efforts close
The Queen whose hand the keys of mercy hold,
Her eyes of pity turns upon our woes;
And when we fall, when sin proclaims its sway,
She lifts us up, and wards the wrath away.

CHIABRERA.

* Canticles iii. 7.

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waters of sin. She is the garden inaccessible to the snares of the enemy; she is the Virgin, holy in soul and holy in body; * the eastern gate of the sanctuary,† firmly closed, by which the God of Israel alone hath passed."

Borne by so fair and numerous an escort, Mary rises to the starry vault of heaven. She beholds the silver moon bow with respect to her feet as she passes, and the great orb of day makes her a splendid halo with his rays. The nearer she approaches, the more the abode of the saints is radiant with joy, and acclamations redouble. Our Divine Redeemer, not satisfied with the convoy sent to meet his Mother, comes forth himself with the rest of the angels and all the saints, desiring, we might say, to render Mary's triumph more glorious than his own.‡ He wishes to lead her himself into the mansion of bliss.

"Why," exclaims the Abbot Guerric, "why did Christ precede his mother into the abode of glory, if not to prepare her an abode, and thus raise her in the most splendid and wonderful manner?" §

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* "Hæc est hortus conclusus, fons signatus ad quem nulli potuerunt doli irrumpere, nec prævalere fraus inimici: sed permansit sancta mente et corpore." "She is the garden enclosed, the fountain sealed up, that no wiles of the enemy could break into, nor fraud prevail over; but she remained holy in mind and body." (St. Jerome, *Ep.* 10. *ad Eustach. de Assumptione.*)

† St. Bernardine of Sienna is of this opinion.

‡ "Invenies occursum ejus pompæ digniorem quam in Christi Ascensione. Soli quippe angeli Redemptori occurrere, Matri vero Filius ipse cum tote curia tam angelorum quam sanctorum occurrens, auxit ad beatæ consistorium sessionis."—"You will find her Assumption attended with more worthy pomp than the Ascension of Christ. Angels alone met our Redeemer, but her Son himself, with all the court of saints and angels meeting his mother, increased the splendor of the ceremony." (St. Peter Damien, *Serm. de Assumpt.*)

§ "Ego ut Patrem honorarem ad terram decendi; ut Matrem honorarem ad cœlum reascendi."—"To honor my Father, I descended to earth, to honor my mother I reascended to heaven." (*Serm. I. de Assumpt. B. M. V.*)

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When Christ came near Mary, he said: "Hasten, my beloved;* the winter is past; the time of trial and labor is past; come from Libanus, my beloved: come from Libanus to be crowned."

When the heavenly hosts beheld their beloved Queen enter soul and body, all heaven became one harmony, all in rivalry sang her glorious triumph. The angels praise her, the archangels congratulate her, the virtues glorify her. The principalities exult; the powers, dominations, thrones, leap for joy. The seraphim exalt her; the cherubim glorify her; the patriarchs admire her; the prophets untiringly contemplate her; the Apostles and martyrs salute in her their mistress and their Queen. David cannot withhold his joy on beholding such a fruit of his royal line. Joachim and Anne seek first to press to their bosom their beloved daughter. The Blessed Virgin, humble amid such a triumph, returns thanks to each, salutes them with love; but her first thought is to fall down before the august Trinity, to thank Him for the benefits and signal favors which He had lavished upon her on earth. But the vault of heaven resounds with new canticles, with melody till then unheard in heaven, when, in the presence of all the heavenly court, who behold in silence the triumph of humility, the Eternal Father, after expressing the striking merits of his beloved daughter, presents to our Divine Redeemer the immortal diadem with which he crowns her Queen of heaven and earth.† When her brow is encircled with this diadem,‡ all praise her again, all glorify her, all

* My love, my dove, my beautiful one. (Cant. ii. 10.)

† Thus nearly does Saint John Damascenus describe the triumph of the Blessed Virgin.

‡ The daughters saw her and declared her most blessed, and the queens praised her. (Cant. vi. 8.)

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emulously repeat: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people:* hasten to occupy the throne which the Almighty has prepared for thee; put on the starry mantle, which will render thee fairer to our eyes, and will be a sweet refuge for sinners; make our wings a footstool for thy feet, and after Christ, reign second in heaven." Rendering heartfelt thanksgiving once more to the Trinity, Mary, accompanied by her divine Son, and attended by myriads of angels,—Mary, silent and modest, proceeds to the throne prepared for her, and rises majestically amid the court of heaven.

And then, as daughter, she participates in the power of the Father; as mother, in the wisdom of the Son; as spouse, in the love of the Holy Ghost; and the three Divine persons command that Mary's throne be eternally placed at the right hand of Jesus Christ, and that angels and all other creatures acknowledge her as Queen, obey her, and render her eternal homage.

But what rash boldness is ours, to essay to describe a triumph which transcends all human understanding! What shall we have said of Mary's glory, when we shall have related, that her the angels and archangels, her the thrones and principalities, faithfully serve;† that her the powers and the virtues of the heavens, and all dominations obey; that her the cherubim and seraphim attend; that to her all angelic creatures unceasingly chant: "Holy, holy, holy, Mother of God, Virgin and Mother!" What shall we have

* Judith xv. 10.

† Tibi omnes angeli et archangeli, tibi throni et Principatus fideliter deserviunt, tibi omnes Potestates et virtutes cœlorum, et universæ Dominationes obediunt; tibi omnes chori, tibi cherubim et seraphim existentes assistunt, tibi omnis angelica creatura incessabili voce proclamat; Sancta, Sancta, Sancta Dei Genitrix, Mater et Virgo." (Saint Bonaventure, *in Cantic.*)

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said, when, with Saint Athanasius,* we repeat that the Blessed Virgin, as mother, shares with Christ the right of reigning, because it is due to the King's mother to be a Queen. What shall we have understood of Mary's sublimity in heaven, when with Saint Gregory, the Pope,† we say, that in the palace of heaven, where there are so many sublime thrones, and where each one is rewarded according to his own merits, there is a throne which towers above all the rest; that is to say, that the Queen beholds none above her, except the King; that the mediatrix sees nothing greater than herself except the Mediator? All this, indeed, is but a feeble part of Mary's glory in heaven. Mary gives God more joy than all the saints; she leads the virgins who every where follow the Lamb. In heaven, on earth, and in hell, all creatures subjected to the sway of the Trinity, obey the glorious Virgin, and each of her glories taken separately, would suffice to give us immortal beatitude.‡ To these privileges, and

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* "Christo hoc regendi et imperandi jus participavit beata Virgo tanquam ejus Mater, regis enim mater regina sit oportet." (*Serm. de Deipara.*)

† "Sit igitur illud cœli palatium plenum sedibus et thronis, sede atque Deus in omnibus accomodans se et aptans cuique pro meritis; non immerito tamen creditur sine injuria vel invidia cæterarum sedium, quoddam esse speciale regis solium excelsum et elevatum super gloriam omnium. Mariam dico exaltatam super choros angelorum, ut nihil contemplatur supra se Mater nisi Filium suum: nihil miratur supra se regina nisi regem solum: nihil veneratur supra se Mediatrix nisi mediatorem solum." (St. Gregory, Pope, *Hom. XXXVIII. in Evang.*)

‡ "Tot creaturæ serviunt gloriosæ Virgini Mariæ quot serviunt Trinitati, omnes nempe creaturæ quemcumque gradum teneant in creatis, sive spirituales ut angeli, sive rationales ut homines, sive corporales, ut cœli et elementa, sive damnati sive beati; omnia quæ divino imperio sunt subjugata, gloriosæ Virgini sunt subjectæ." (St. Bernardine of Sienna. *Serm.* lxi.)—"All creatures that serve the Trinity, serve the glorious Virgin Mary; all creatures, whatever rank they hold in creation, whether spiritual as angels, or rational as men, or corporal as the heavens and the elements, whether damned or elect; all that are subjected to the divine sway, are subject to the glorious Virgin."



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a thousand others, let us add, that the Blessed Virgin not only is maintained in the fulness of the saints,* but also that she maintains the saints in fulness; that she is the terror of hell, the advocate of man; and let us say with Saint Ildephonsus,† that as Mary has lived an incomparable life here below, so she enjoys amid the saints an incomprehensible glory.

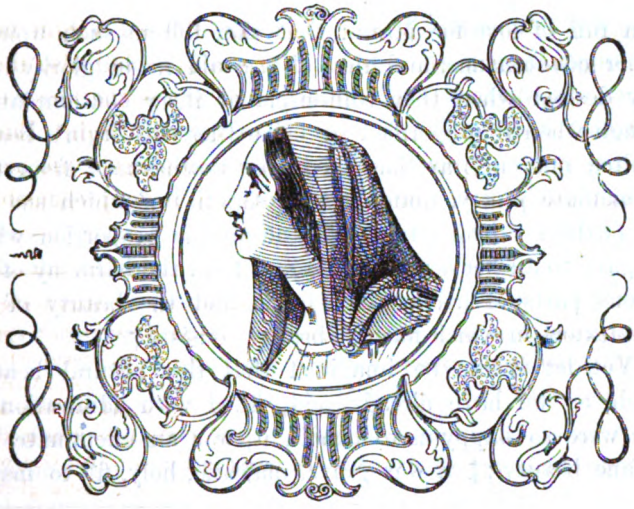
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* Beata Virgo non solum in plenitudine sanctorum detinetur sed etiam in plenitudine sanctos detinet, ne eorum plenitudo minuatur. (Saint Bonaventure, *Spec.* c. vii.) The abbot Guerric exclaims (*Serm. I. in Assumpt.*): "Nullatenus autem credideris majoris esse felicitatis et gloriæ . . . in sinu Abrahæ quam in sinu Mariæ. cum thronum suum in ea posuerit Rex gloriæ."—"In no way would you have believed there to be more felicity and glory in the bosom of Abraham, than in the bosom of Mary, since the King of Glory set his throne in her."—"After God, our greatest glory and our greatest joy is Mary."—"Post Deum major nostra gloria, et majus nostrum gaudium ex Maria est."

† "Sicut est incomparabile quod gessit, ita et incomprehensibile premium et gloria inter omnes sanctos quam meruit."—"As her life was incomparable, so her reward and glory amid all the Saints, is incomprehensible." (*Serm. II. de Assumpt.* chap. VIII.)



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CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE FEATURES OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND HER BEAUTY.



MOST unfinished would our historic labor be, were we not to bask for a moment in gazing on the most sweet countenance of our august Lady. Fair, doubtless, were Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, and Judith; rich in grace and beauty Bersabee, Abigail, Esther, and others of whom the Holy Scriptures speak; but how much more full of grace and beauty must she have been, of whom was born the fairest of the children of men! * We need not wonder that all the saints have

* "Beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3.) "As the body of Christ," says Albertus Magnus, "is the most perfect and beautiful in nature, so far as it could be according to the condition of this life, so the Virgin's body was imme-



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been full of love for Mary; that they tell us such wonders of her countenance, and that they could never glorify it as they desired when they contemplated it, or contemplate it enough when they glorified it. The Blessed Virgin's beauty resulted not only, as Saint Ambrose teaches us,* from that immaculate purity, that heavenly sanctity of which she was the faithful mirror; from that admirable proportion which she gave to all her actions: but also from the harmony of the various parts of her virginal body, and the beauty of her complexion, in which natural beauty consists.†

Yet let it not be imagined that this natural beauty, which, as we have already said, filled with admiration all who were so happy as to behold it, was an effeminate and profane beauty;‡ it was grave, majestic, holy, fit to inspire

diately ordained on this the most beautiful, according to the condition of this life, that nature operating by itself could make. We say, therefore, that as Christ was beautiful in form above the sons of men, so the Virgin was most beautiful among the daughters of men, and had the most supremely perfect body that nature could produce in a mortal female form."—Quemadmodum corpus Christi est perfectissimum et pulcherrimum in natu a quoad fieri potuit secundum statum viæ, sic corpus virginis ad hoc immediate ordinatum fuit pulcherrimum secundum statum viæ, quod natura per se operans facere potest. Ideo dicimus quod sicut Christus fuit speciosus forma præ filiis hominum, sic Virgo pulcherrima fuit inter filias hominum et quod ipsa habuit summum et perfectissimum quod potuit esse in mortali corpore fœmineo secundum statum viæ, operante natura. (*Apud. Dion. Carth. de Laud bus Virg.*)

* "Ipsa corporis species simulacrum fuit mentis, figura probitatis; nihil torvum in oculis, nihil in incessu solutior."—"Her body was a mirror of her mind, the figure of probity, nothing immodest in eye or gai." (*De Virg. Lib. II.* vi.)

† "Omnis corporis pulchritudo est partium congruentia cum quadam coloris suavitate."—"All bodily beauty is a proper adaptation of parts with a certain sweetness of coloring." (St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei. Lib. xxii. c. xix.) He derived this definition from the philosophers who preceded him. Of all who have treated *Of the Beautiful*, physical, or moral, none surpasses Bagnacavallo, prematurely lost to literature and philosophy.

‡ At tamen fuit non fœmineo et illecebroso, sed gravi decore, venerabili et augusta pulchritudine. (Cornelius a Lapide, Prov. c. xxxi.)

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respect; since, according to all the Fathers and Doctors,* the mere sight of Mary was enough to put to flight the demon of concupiscence. Hence they justly apply to the Blessed Virgin the praises given in the Canticle of Canticles to the spouse, by the author of all beauty, when, according to the beautiful reflection of the Abbot Rupert,† he praises the eyes, the hair, the teeth, the lips, the cheeks, the neck, the breasts, of her who had wounded his heart. "In Mary's eyes," continues the same Abbot, "we behold simplicity; in her hair, purity of thought; in her teeth, innocence; in her lips, doctrine; in her cheeks, modesty; in her neck, humility; in her breasts, wonderful fruitfulness united to virginity." If her stature is compared to the palm-tree, it is because the palm,‡ lofty by nature, straight and majestic amid trees, represents the majesty and simplicity which the Blessed Virgin ever preserved in her person, even in old age, as we have already said.

To gratify the pious, who desire to know exactly the features of our beloved Mother, we shall here set down what

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* Dennis the Carthusian speaks thus of the Blessed Virgin: "All other Virgins were thorns either to themselves or others; she excited the hearts of beholders to chastity."—Hales (*Theol.* III. p. q. 9. num. 2. art. 5). "Beata Virgo suo aspectu concupiscentiæ motus extinxit."—"The Blessed Virgin by her very sight extinguished the motions of concupiscence." The Angelic doctor says: "Tanta erat ejus gratia, ut non solum virginitatis gratiam in se servaret, sed etiam in eos quos viserat integritatis insigne conferret."—"So much was her grace, that she not only preserved virginity in herself, but conferred signal purity on those she looked upon." (Pt. III. dist. III. qui. art. 2. q. 1. ad. 4.)

† "O pulchritudo admirabilis, quam sic admiratur et collaudat pulcherrimus auctor pulchritudinis. Septem præconiis consideravit; oculos, capillos, dentes, labia, genas, collum et ubere, et pro singuli, dilectis singula decantavit digna collaudationis capitula. Laudatur enim in oculis simplicitas, in capillis cogitationum munditia, in dentibus innocentia, in labiis doctrina, in genis verecundia, in collo humilitas, in uberibus admiranda cum fœcunditate virginitas." (Lib. III. *in Cant. super illud*; Quam pulchra, &c.)

‡ Cant. vii. 7.

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Cedrenus * and Nicephorus † have written, who both have endeavored to portray them to us. The Blessed Virgin was of middling stature; yet some say that she was rather tall than otherwise. Her face was slightly oval, resembling in color, according to Nicephorus's comparison, the ripe ear of wheat. Her hair was fair, her eyebrows black and gracefully arched, her eyes bright, the pupil hazel, her nose rather long, her lips ruddy, and full of sweet words, her hands and fingers long and delicate. Modest and grave in all things, she seldom spoke; indeed, only when compelled by necessity. She always readily listened to others with respect and deference. Far removed from all pride and luxuriousness, simple, and full of humility, she reproved with becoming freedom, without laughter, without agitation, and above all without anger. She wore garments that had not borrowed false colors from art. Her head was habitually veiled, and, to comprise all in brief, a divine grace shone in all her actions.

It is true, that some critics regard as false or imaginary this description of Nicephorus, the more especially as it does not agree with that drawn by Saint Anselm, or the author of

* Compend. hist. p. 147.

† Nicephorus, on the authority of the priest Epiphanius, thus describes her (Lib. II. c. 23): "Erat in rebus omnibus honesta et gravis, pauca admodum eaque necessaria loquens, ad audiendum facilis et perquam affabilis honorem suum et venerationem omnibus exhibens; statura fuit mediocri, quamvis sint qui eam Aliquantulum mediocrem longitudinem excessisse dicant. Decent libertate adversus homines usa es sine risu, sine perturbatione, et sine iracundia maxime. Colore fuit triticum referente, capillo flavo oculis acribus, sub flavas et tanquam oleæ colore pupillas in eis habens. Supercilia ei erant inflexa et docenter nigra. Nasus longior, labia florida, et verborum suavitate plena; facies non rotunda et acuta, sed aliquanto longior, manus simul et digiti longiores. Erat denique fastus omnis expers simplex minimeque vultum pingens; nihil mollitiæ secum trahens sed humilitatem præcellentem colens. Vestimentis quæ ipsa gestavit coloris nativi contenta fuit, id quod etiam nunc sanctum capitis ejus velamen ostendit, et, ut paucis dicam, in rebus ejus omnibus multa divinitus inerat gratia."

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the book attributed to him.* Baronius,† followed by others, believes that this description was based on some portrait of the Virgin, and not drawn from herself; and many deny that Saint Luke ‡ is the author of the portraits attributed to him.

* Ex gestis Anselmi colligitur forma et mores beatæ Mariæ et ejus imici filii Jesu.

† "Sed in his non immoror, cum ex pictura aliqua prototypa hæc potius descripta quam ex viventis ipsius imagine esse videantur accepta."—"But I do not dwell on these descriptions, which seem drawn from some picture as a prototype, rather than from life." (Ad an. 48. n. 26.) Sixtus Senensis in his *Bib. Sanct.* II. 80, follows this opinion; he says: "Vidimus olim Venetiis, in ædibus Titiani celebratissimi nostrorum temporum pictoris, exemplar hujus picturæ ex archetypo De Lucæ ut credebatur, excerptum, in quo spectabantur, omnes illæ notæ quas itidem Nicephorus expressit in secundo ejusdem historiæ volumine."—"I have seen at Venice, in the studio of Titian, the most famous painter of our day, a copy of this picture ascribed to Saint Luke, and in it all are the features described by Nicephorus, in the second volume of his history."

‡ It is a vexed question to know whether the portraits ascribed to Saint Luke, are really his; for Saint Paul calls him a physician and not a painter. The first who mentions these pictures of Saint Luke is Theodoret in the 6th century, who writes that Eudocia sent Saint Pulcheria from Jerusalem, the likeness of the Blessed Virgin painted by the Evangelist. Nicephorus (Hist. Lib. XV. c. xiv.) relates, that Saint Pulcheira placed this picture with that of Our Lord, in the Church of Hodegus, erected by her at Constantinople, of which we shall speak in the next chapter. Cardinals Toledo, Bellarmine, Gotti, and other writers of some authority, affirm, that Saint Luke was a painter. As such he was generally esteemed till the time of Henry Valois, who called it in question. Dupins, Tillemont, Calmet, seek arguments to sustain him. Lami discovered and published an ancient relation about a picture of the Blessed Virgin, preserved in the Church del' Impruneta, and ascribed to a Florentine painter named Luke, who lived piously in the eleventh century, and merited the title of Saint; he considered that the confusion arose from this. Lamy's opinion was upheld by Dominic Mary Manni. It is not our design to enter into such questions. We shall only remark that portraits of the Blessed Virgin made by Saint Luke are mentioned long before the eleventh century, and were uncontroverted; and that if the Apostle called St. Luke physician, and not painter (Coloss. xiv.), it was to distinguish and honor him more. Still we do not maintain that all the portraits attributed to St. Luke are his. [St. Francis Borgia had a special devotion to the portrait of the Blessed Virgin by Saint Luke, and had many copies made; the blessed Ignatius Azevedo, martyred by the enemies of the faith while returning as a missionary to America, clasped to

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To these objections we will answer with Trombelli,* that probably Cedrenus and Nicephorus have represented her not according to any portrait, but according to some ancient popular tradition that might have come down to them. The illustrious Philip Bonarotti † proves that true likenesses of Saint Peter and Saint Paul have reached us. Now, would the faithful have more carefully preserved the memory of the features of these two princes of the Apostles, rather than those of the Blessed Virgin? It is no less pleasing to think, that not only Saint Luke, but others also, transmitted to posterity the cherished portrait of the Blessed Virgin, and that the Apostles themselves distributed copies to excite the new Christians to venerate and love the august Mother of God.‡

It is useless to urge against us the authority of Saint Augustine,§ who writes that the likeness of the Blessed Virgin Mother of our Redeemer was not known in his time; the holy and learned doctor simply means that he himself had never seen the picture which the Empress Saint Pulcheria brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople, and of which probably several copies had been made, either from the original, or from previous copies. The reason is evident—these pictures were better known in the East than in the West. Hippo, where Saint Augustine preached, is very far from

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his heart, when hurled from the ship, a copy of this picture given him by St. Francis, and sank with it.]

* Part I. diss. xli.

† *On the glasses found in the Catacombs.*

‡ Albergothi, Bishop of Arezzo, in his Life of Mary (II. c. xxiv. n. 4.), relates, on the faith of several authors, that St. Peter at Antioch had several portraits of Mary, made not by St. Luke, but by others; that St. Paul at Malta had three made; that St. Thomas carried one to India, and St. Matthew one to Ethiopia.

§ *Super Trinit.* Lib. VIII. c. iv. n. 7.

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Constantinople; and if he had before him portraits of the Blessed Virgin made by other painters, it might well be that these copies of copies differed so from each other as to inspire doubt as to the real portrait of the Blessed Virgin.

Now, if such was the exterior beauty of the Blessed Virgin Immaculate, what shall we say of her interior beauty? that is to say, of those gifts and the grace by which she pleased God! From the moment where we began to speak of her conception, we have seen her unceasing advance in virtue, thus meriting at last so great a glorification in heaven; so that, were we to attempt to speak on this point, we should only repeat what we have thus far said. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church never, it seems, could find a subject dearer to their hearts than this. "As Mary's Son," exclaims Saint Bernardine of Sienna, "is the Saint of saints, it follows that the mother who bore him is the saint of female saints, containing that precious treasure; that she is the tabernacle of God, the throne of God, and the chamber of God. In the fulness of human and angelic sanctity, there the Blessed Virgin Mother of God laid the foundation of her sanctity, and planted her virginal foot." * See, too, with what admirable logic the holy Archbishop of Valentia, Saint Thomas of Villanova, sets forth this exterior and interior beauty of Mary: "Children," says he, "are ordinarily the living image of their parents; and these transmit to their children not only their inclinations and corporal infirmities, their features, color, form, gait, but also their passions, morals, genius, vir-

* "Sicut Filius Mariæ est Sanctus Sanctorum, ita constat quod Mater quæ ipsum portavit est Sancta Sanctarum, in qua erat ille pretiosus thesaurus tabernaculum Dei, thronus Dei atque thalamus Dei. Ubi ergo plenitudo sanctitatis humanæ atque angelicæ, ibi semper Virgo Dei Mater prima suæ sanctitatis jecit fundamenta, ibi detinuit gradum, et plantam fixit virgineam." (*Tom. III. Serm. II.*)

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tues, and vices." * Now if this takes place generally in others, much more so in Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, according to nature.

Other children being common to father and mother, naturally take something from each, and from this mixture the character of the child is distinct from either. But who knows not that Christ had no earthly father? Deriving his body, then, from his mother alone, he must have resembled her in the features of the countenance, and the qualities of the soul. Those who had the glorious privilege of beholding our Divine Redeemer with their own eyes, declare that the son was the perfect image of the mother. Both were humble, pure, prudent, pious, in the highest degree. Finally, the Blessed Virgin resembled her divine Son, as Jesus was in every thing the image of his immaculate Mother. Although all the saints have endeavored to resemble Christ (for herein consists all our perfection), yet each resembled him but in part. One drew nigh him in humility, another in chastity, another in meekness. His mother alone imitated him in all, and resembled him in grace and virtue, excepting, of course, that perfection which resulted from the union of the divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus. Mary was, then, a perfect likeness of her Son, as she herself says in the Canticles: "I am black, but beautiful as the tents of Cedar, as the curtains of Solomon;" † which means: "If you consider my mortal condition, I am black as the tents of Cedar, because I am a mere mortal, a daughter of Adam, flesh and bone, like other virgins; but, if you consider grace, I am beautiful as the tents of Solomon; that is, I am beautiful by imitating Christ in all his virtues, which are here compared to the tents of Solomon, inasmuch as Christ alone, to the

* *Conc. III. de Nativ. M. V.* † Cant. i. 4.

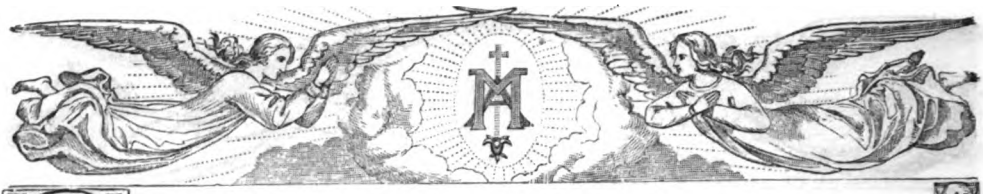
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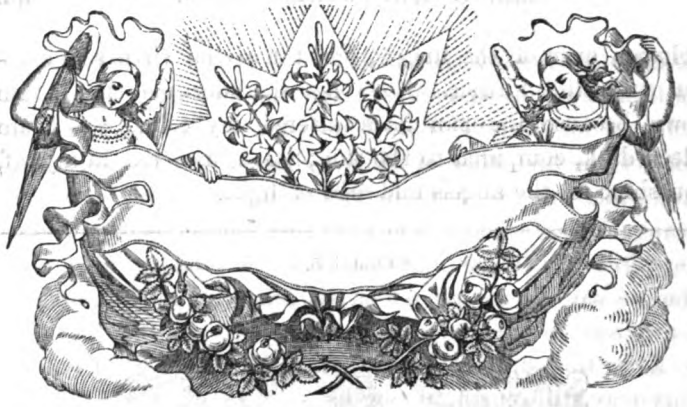
exclusion even of the angels, has the divine virtues in common with the Father. "Do not consider me that I am brown because the sun hath altered my color." * I am indeed dark, compared to the sun; but considered in myself, I outshine all the angels and orbs of light.

* Cant. i. 5.



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CHAPTER IX.

RELICS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND LETTERS ATTRIBUTED TO HER.

IF our holy Mother was, as we have seen, borne to heaven and glorified in body and soul, how can we find her sacred relics on earth? We must deny the Assumption, or condemn as false the relics, which, as relics of the Blessed Virgin, receive the homage and veneration of the faithful. This objection is of no force or value, when we know what these relics are, which holy Church has ever venerated with so much piety and love.

Theologians divide the relics of saints into three classes :* in the first they place substances; that is to say, the body entire, or a considerable part thereof; in the second, integral relics, which belong to a body, but constitute no essential part thereof; finally, in the third, sanctified relics; that is, those which merit homage and veneration, in consequence of

* Trombelli, *De Cultu Sanctorum*, Dissert. VII. ch. I.



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the close relation which has existed between these relics and the blessed whom we honor. After this necessary distinction, each sees for himself, that, if it is impossible for us to have relics of the first class of Mary—that is, the body—we may have others, as we have in fact; and one cannot, without great rashness, scandal, and even suspicion of heresy, combat the *cultus* which the universal Church renders these relics. This we say, be it understood, of relics in general, and not of any relic in particular.

After this statement of doctrine, let us see what relics of Mary may still remain among us.

First of all, we meet those called integral; these relics are the hair and nails. They are called integral, because the hair and nails belong to the *integrity* of the body, although they are not an essential part. Hair is man's natural diadem; and the poet of Sulmo compares a head devoid of hair * to a field without verdure, to a leafless tree. The nails, besides being an ornament, and, so to speak, a complement of the body, are of great utility to man; but as they are frequently cut, they are much less prized than the hair: we need not then be surprised, if the primitive Christians more carefully collected and preserved the hair of martyrs and other saints.

The faithful thus, doubtless, gave all care to procure the Virgin's hair, while she still lived on this earth; or, according to others, when she was laid in the tomb, her hair was cut, and Christians have preserved with great care and pious veneration this treasure which they duly prized. The Sovereign Pontiffs, always so prudent in offering to the faithful only authentic relics, particularly in the consecration of the

* Turpe pecus mutilum; turpe est sine gramine campus;
Et sine fonde frutex et sine crine caput.

OVID, *de Art. Lib. III.*

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altars of the Basilicas, have more than once placed in the altars portions of the Blessed Virgin's hair ; thus, as Baronius relates,* Pope Calixtus enclosed some in the altar consecrated by him in honor of Saint Agnes. Heretics and Protestants, denying the authenticity of these relics, have alleged that hair could not be preserved so many ages, and that, moreover, the great number of these relics refutes their authenticity. We reply, that the Blessed Virgin's hair might very easily be preserved with all the care taken to protect it ; next, that the hair might be divided into very small parts ; and, moreover, that these precious relics are not as numerous as heretics pretend. This is well known by the illustrious John Ferrand,† who enumerates with extreme care

* *Annal.* Tom. XII. ad ann. 1122. n. 3. where he speaks of the hair and veil of the Blessed Virgin.

† "Horum capillorum aliquot Romæ, tum ad Sanctæ Crucis, tum ad Sancti Joannis Lateranensis, denique ad Divæ Majoris Basilicam monstrari refert Onuphrius (*De Sept. Urbis Ecclesiis*) ; aureo colore flavescere quemadmodum et illos, qui Oliveti apud Hispanos magna cum religione coluntur. Paribus Marianæ comæ lypsanis Anicum, Parisii, Trecæ, Aquisgranum, Vesuntio, et Fanum Audomari se divites ac fortunatos deprædicant civitates. Aliquid tandem eorundem crinium amplissimum quondam Beatæ Virgini sacrum in Croylandiæ monasterium asservarit, quos crines Henricus imperator ab Hugone Francorum rege Christianissimo aurea in pyxide acceptos illi cœnobio regiæ munificentiæ donavit." (*Disquisit. Reliquiar.* Lib. I. chap. II.) Some of this hair is shown, according to Onuphrius, at Santa Croce, St. John Lateran, and St. Mary Major's. It is of a golden color, like that which is honored with great devotion at Oviedo, in Spain. Annesy, Paris, Triers, Aix, Besançon, and Saint Omers claim to be similarly enriched. A large relic of the same hair was preserved in the great abbey of Croyland, given with royal munificence in a golden shrine to that monastery, by the Emperor Henry, who had received it from Hugh, king of France. In Book IV. ch. iv. sec. iv., the same Ferrand proves by many examples the care with which the primitive Christians gathered the hair of the martyrs, according to the words of St. Luke: "Not a hair of your head shall perish ;" and he explains that in lapse of time, it might happen "that the body of the faithful, when the authentic documents of so many relics were lost, defaced, or destroyed by fire, confounded the relics, or having them mixed together by the malice of heretics, would mistake the hair of so many

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all the places where, in his time, any portion of her hair existed. He even goes further, and explains how the authenticity of some of these relics may be established.

To the integral relics of the saints, belong the blood and milk which the faithful gathered and piously preserved, as ecclesiastical historians attest. We have no relic of Mary's blood; and this is not surprising, as she died a natural death. Although many churches, according to the testimony of Ferrand,* boast of possessing her milk, it is not to be supposed that this milk is in any great quantity: all together would probably not fill a small phial. If it is asked how the milk was obtained, we shall answer, with Ferrand and Trombelli, that it came miraculously from some statues of the Blessed Virgin, as Saint Antoninus teaches,† or that the faithful have metaphorically given the name of milk‡ to the white dust like lime or starch scraped from the walls of some sanctuary or grotto, where the Blessed Virgin is believed

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saints, and on account of the similarity, believe by a pious error, that some was hair of Christ, and the Blessed Virgin, and innocently believe it in ignorance . . . but how can this innocent error interfere with Christian faith, and piety, and the divine worship?"

* "Pretiosissimi Virginei lactis guttulis Assisium in Italia, Olivetum in Hispania, Parisienses, Anicienses, Bisuntines, Remenses, aliosque in Gallia potiri." (Lib. I. c. ii.) "Assisium in Italy, Oviedo in Spain, Paris, Annecy, Besançon, Rheims, and other cities claim to possess drops of the Virginal milk."

† Apud. FERRAND. Lib. I. c. iv. art. 3. sect. 3.

‡ Ferrand, already cited, proves this, if not certainly, at least by plausible reasons; moreover, it seems needless for us to prove here how the milk or white humor issued from the heads of martyrs beheaded. In the homily on St. Peter and St. Paul, attributed to St John Chrysostom, and inserted in the Roman Breviary on the octave of their feast, at the second nocturn it is said that the blood of the apostle appeared of the color of milk on the dress of the headsman, which is confirmed by the Abbot Guerric (*Serm. II. in Natali SS. Apost. Petri et Pauli*): and it will be enough to cite the following from the Roman Martyrology, July 15. "At Sebaste, St. Antiochus, physician, who was beheaded under Adrian, the President, and when from him flowed milk and blood, &c."

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to have suckled the infant Jesus during the flight into Egypt.

As to relics termed sanctified, they are doubtless more numerous than the preceding. We shall mention, first, the band or girdle, which the Greeks have since the fourth century claimed to possess, and which the Empress Saint Pulcheria transferred from Jerusalem. Germanus, Bishop of Constantinople, and the monk Euthymius,* say that this girdle was always held in great veneration. It is mentioned also in the Greek menology of the Emperor Basil,† and in that published by Cardinal Sirleto.‡ From this cincture various relics were afterwards taken, which have been preserved in Italy, France, and elsewhere, and of which, as Ferrand affirms, miracles have attested the authenticity.§

* See the sermons in LIPOMANUS, *Vitæ Sanct. prisc.* Tom. VI. Aug. xxxi.

† In the Urbino edition of 1727, under Aug. 31, we read: "Arcadius, Magni Theodosii filius, venerandam sanctissimæ Dei genitricis zonam Hierosolymis educens, ubi usque ad illa tempora una cumpretiosa veste fuerat a quadam virgine asservata, eamque Constantinopolim transferens deposuit in elegante bibliotheca, quæ sancta urna fuit appellata."—"Arcadius, son of Theodosius the Great, brought to Constantinople the girdle of the most Blessed Virgin Mother of God, from Jerusalem, where it had till then been preserved by a certain virgin, and deposited it for public veneration in an elegant shrine which was called the Holy Urn." He then relates how it was found four hundred years after, under the Emperor Leo, and how by the touch of this girdle the patriarch delivered the Empress Zoe, who was tormented by an impure spirit.

‡ This Greek menology was first published by Cardinal Sirleto, and is inserted in the celebrated collection of Henry Canisius. The following words confirm the prodigy mentioned above. "On the thirty-first day of August, commemoration of the precious girdle of the most holy Mary, Mother of God, preserved in her venerable church, as the girdle itself was brought by the Bishop Zele, under the Emperor Justinian, and a miracle wrought by the imposition of the girdle on Queen Zoe, wife of the Emperor Leo.

§ The pious and holy Empress Pulcheria, not only built the church in Blachernis, but also those of Chalcopratum and Hodegus. In the last she placed over an altar adorned with gold and precious stones, the celebrated portrait of the Blessed Virgin by St. Luke. It was considered as the palladium of the Empire; it was

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We have mentioned above how the Empress Saint Pulcheria brought to Constantinople the garments of the Blessed Virgin, and solemnly enshrined them. The faithful, to satisfy their devotion, are also in the habit of venerating, as relics, dust taken from the tomb where Mary reposed for a time, or from the sanctuaries of which we have spoken.

Cedrenus * and Nicephorus † relate that, when Constantinople was besieged by the impious tyrant Thamasp, Theophilus the patriarch bore in procession these relics of the Blessed Virgin, with the wood of the Holy Cross, and that the city was soon after delivered from that cruel and powerful enemy. It is probable that on that occasion, or on some other, parcels of these relics were distributed among other churches. Baronius, indeed, declares that Pope Calixtus placed in the altar of Saint Agnes, not only the hair, but also the veil of the Blessed Virgin. It is to be presumed that some of these relics were not garments worn by Mary in her lifetime, but which had been on some ancient and miraculous statue. Even now we find some churches preserving as relics, veils and robes which have served to adorn statues of the Virgin Mother of God.

It will, we think, please our readers, to state that Chartres

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figuratively called *The Giver of Victory.* It was borne in great pomp to the field of battle, and was always brought back on a splendid car drawn by magnificent white steeds. On the principal feasts it was carried out of the church, amid the joyous acclamations of the people.

Some believe that this is the same picture as that now venerated in the convent of Monte Vergine, to which it was given by Catharine II. of Valois, wife of Philip, prince of Tarentum, fourth son of Charles II. king of Naples; he was great-grand nephew of Baldwin II., who, forced by a conspiracy of the Greeks to abandon the Eastern Empire, transported it from Constantinople with other riches and holy relics. (See AQUILA, Dict. of the Bible, art. ST. LUKE.)

* CEDRENUS *in Michaele Balbo*, p. 503. (Ed. Paris.)

† Lib. XVI. c. xxiv.

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claims to possess a garment of the Immaculate Virgin;* that the city of Prato, in Tuscany, glories in possessing a girdle;† that another girdle is venerated at Bologna, in the church of Saint Stephen;‡ and that several rings, believed to have been worn by the Blessed Virgin, are preserved with great honor in Italy and other countries.§

Among the more precious relics should be numbered, were they authentic, the letters which have come to us in the name of the Blessed Virgin, and which are pretended to be three in number.‖ The first is a reply to Saint Ignatius the martyr, who had questioned her as to her Son and his doctrine. To satisfy the curiosity of those who have never seen them, we here insert translations of the three.

To Ignatius, the Disciple of John:

The humble handmaid of Jesus Christ.

The things which thou teachest, and which thou hast learned of John, are all true. Believe them firmly, and conform thy life to thy faith. I shall endeavor, with John, to see both thee and those that are with thee. Abide in the faith,

* [A silver reliquary, in the form of this relic, was sent to Canada soon after its settlement, and is still preserved in the Church of Loretto.]

† De Prato, *Notizie istoriche.* This treats of the authenticity of a cincture preserved in the city of Prato. (See Trombelli's remarks on it. Part. II. Diss. XXIII. Sect. III. c. i. and ii.)

‡ Consult Trombelli in the same work (*de Cultu Sanctorum diss. VIII.* 17. 5.), and the letter attributed to Mabillon, entitled "Letter of a Benedictine on the discernment of ancient relics."

§ See our remarks in Book II. c. i.

‖ Saint Antoninus speaks of them (*Chron.* Pt. I. tit. VII. cap. I. § I.); some add four more letters; two to the Apostle Saint John, mentioned by Baronius; a third published by Erasmus, on the holy house of Loretto, and finally a fourth addressed to Friar Antoninus de Villa Basilica, published by Lamy. The letters best known, and as to which there may be a doubt, are the three cited by us.

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labor courageously, be not disheartened by persecution, but let thy mind abide in health, and rejoice in God. Amen."

The second letter is addressed to the inhabitants of Messina. It is said to have been translated into Greek by Saint Paul, and into Latin by Constantine Lascaris, in 1467. It is as follows :

MARY, VIRGIN, DAUGHTER OF JOACHIM, most humble Mother of God, Jesus Christ, of the tribe of Juda, of the family of Juda :

To all the inhabitants of Messina, health and benediction of God the Father Almighty.

"We know that with great faith you have publicly sent ambassadors, confessing that our Son, the Son of God, is at once God and man ; that he has risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven ; and that, by the preaching of Paul, you know the way of truth. Hence we bless you and your city, and will ever be its protectress.

"The year of our Divine Son, Indiction 1, the 11th of June, the 27th of the moon, fifth day of the week from Jerusalem."

Finally, the third letter belongs to the Florentines. It was discovered by the illustrious Father Jerome Savanarola, about the year 1460 ; its translation is :

"O Florence, dear to God, to the Lord Jesus my Son, and to me, preserve the faith, persevere in prayer, arm thyself with patience ; thus shalt thou obtain eternal salvation with God, and glory with men."



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Although many authors have maintained the authenticity of these letters, we need not enter into a serious examination, or adduce arguments to show their falsity, but will say enough in noting, with Baronius,* that they lack the sanction of the Church, and should therefore be regarded as apocryphal; more especially as those who possess the letters cannot give a complete and luminous history of them. The Messinians, indeed, celebrate in their city a feast called "Feast of the Blessed Virgin's Letter," † and at Rome itself a commemoration is made of the feast in the Sicilian church, and in St. Peter's *in Montorio;* but Benedict XIV. himself, in his noble work on the Beatification and Canonization of the Saints,‡ says, that this tradition is not approved by the Holy See. Some Sicilians, having applied to him while he was Promoter of the Faith, begged him to mention this letter in the new editions of his work; but Benedict XIV. advised

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* "Fertur ejusdem Dei genitricis epistola ad Ignatium reddita, ejusdemque Ignatii una ad ipsam scripta, duæ vero ad Joannem evangelistam de eadem ipsa loquentes. Sed Hieronymus et alii antiquiores, qui ejusdem Ignatii recensuerunt epistolas, eas non noverunt. Traduntur et aliæ ab ipsa ad alias scriptæ civitates, quas cunctas cum careant Ecclesiæ auctoritate, non nisi in apocryphorum classes rejiciendas esse omnes facile judicabunt."—"There is a letter of the Mother of God to Ignatius, and one of Ignatius to her, and two to St. John speaking of herself; but Jerome and other more ancient writers still, who enumerate the works of Saint Ignatius, are silent as to these. Others are put forward addressed to various cities, but as they lack the authority of the Church they are to be treated as apocryphal, as all will easily see." (*Ad. ann.* xlviii. *num.* 25.)

† Father Melchior Inchofer (*In Consect. epist. ad. Messan.*), and Father Paul Pelli (in Glor. Mess.), and Placidus Reina (in Notis ad Hist. Messan.), each in a different manner defends the authenticity of these letters, combated by many, including Castro, Serry, Reitano. Roch Perry, in his dissertation on this letter, inserted in his "Notes on Sicilian Churches," maintains that a statue of the Blessed Virgin was found in a garret, which in Sicilian is called Leterio or Leterino; and that by corruption, the Blessed Virgin got the name of Letter.

‡ De Beatif. et Canoniz. Sanctorum. (Lib. IV. c. xxvi. n. 27, and cap. xxxi. n. 26.)

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them to leave things as they were, and to address no petition to the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

This is all we have to say in general as to the relics of the august Virgin. It is enough to show the spirit of the Church in presenting them to the reverence of the faithful. Let us then honor them piously, visit them frequently, and particularly when they are exposed to our solemn veneration ; let us despise the sophisms, the ridiculous objections of unbelievers, which Catholics have a thousand times triumphantly answered ; let us do all we can to induce our brethren to render these holy relics the honor due them, assured that this sincere homage will be agreeable to God, and to the Queen of Angels, and be a sure token of the most signal favors ; since, as Saint John Damascenus teaches, near these relics we shall find a refuge against temptation, and against the chastisements which our faults have drawn upon us.





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CHAPTER X.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN EVER THE PROTECTRESS OF THE CHURCH AND THE FAITHFUL.

CYRIL, patriarch of Alexandria, meditating on the graces and privileges with which God endowed his Blessed Mother, exclaims, full of admiration and love: "O Mary, thou art* that Virgin by whom the Holy Trinity is adored and glorified throughout the universe; by whom heaven exults; through whom the angels and archangels rejoice; by whom devils are

* "Hæc est Virgo per quam sancta Trinitas in universo orbe glorificatur et adoratur, per quam cœlum exultat, per quam angeli et archangeli lætantur, per quam dæmones fugantur, per quam tentator diabolus de cœlo cecidit, per quam prolapsum plasma in cœlum denuo subvehitur, per quam universa creatura, idolorum vesania detecta, ad veritatis cognitionem deducta est, per quam sanctum baptisma obtigit credentibus, per quam exultationis oleum consecratur, per quam toto terrarum orbe fundatæ sunt ecclesiæ, per quam gentes adducuntur ad pœnitentiam, per quam, ut paucis absolvam, unigenitus Dei Filius iis qui in tenebris et in umbra mortis sedebant lux resplenduit."—*Orat. cont. Nestorium.*



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put to flight; by whom the tempter Satan fell from heaven; by whom fallen creatures are again raised to heaven; by whom all men, discovering the vanity of idols, have been brought to a knowledge of the truth; by whom holy baptism is conferred on believers; through whom the oil of exultation is consecrated; through whom churches are founded throughout the world; through whom the nations are brought to penance; through whom, to say all in brief, the only-begotten Son of God shone as a light on those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death." We should fill volumes, were we merely to cite the names of those who have made the praises of our most holy Mother the subject of their works, and have spoken at more or less length on her most signal power and privileges. About to reef our sails and enter the harbor, we should not think that we had spoken sufficiently of the august Mother of God, unless we say some words of her powerful patronage, of which Mary has ever been prodigal to the whole church, and all its children, who in distress have had recourse to so tender a Mother. It is beyond all doubt, that charity increases and is perfected in heaven, and that one of the principal acts of that charity consists in advancing the cause of the Church militant, as the just offer the most High the prayers of men. Holy Scripture portrays to us how fervently, during the war of the Machabees, the prophet Jeremias* prayed for the people, and for all the holy city of Jerusalem; how the twenty-four ancients in the Apocalypse† prostrated

* "After this (Onias) there appeared also (to Judas) another man, admirable for age and glory, and environed with great beauty and majesty; then Onias answering said: This is a lover of his brethren, and of the people of Israel; this is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the holy city, Jeremias, the prophet of God." (II. Mach. xv. 13.)

† "And when he had opened the book the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and

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themselves before the Lamb, each with golden vials, full of incense, which is the prayers of the Saints; and how the Prince of the Apostles tells his disciples * that he will endeavor, after his death, to make them mindful of his teaching.

If, then, the Blessed Virgin, during her life, had so great and constant a care of all those who came to the faith; if she labored so ardently for the advantage of the primitive Christians; if, by her dolors, she contributed with her divine Son to the redemption of the human race, what will she not do in heaven for the Church, now that she sees it so dearly purchased and consecrated by the precious blood of the Divine Redeemer?

Who could measure the force and efficacy of Mary's prayers and intercession in heaven? If, as *the Doctor*, by excellence says,† the Apostles and martyrs crowned in heaven obtain graces much greater than they could have obtained when on earth; when they were still invested with our mortal flesh; if Moses alone repeatedly obtained of God the pardon of the Israelites; ‡ if Stephen, the protomartyr, obtained grace for his most cruel persecutors; § if the holy Apostle Paul ‖ exhorted the two hundred and seventy-two soldiers, who had been with him thirteen days in the vessel, to take some food, what is not the solicitude of the saints for us, now that they

golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints; and they sung a new canticle." (Apoc. v. 8.)

* "Being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me; and I will do my endeavor that after my decease you may also often have whereby you may keep in memory of these things." (II. Peter, i 14–15.)

† Adv. Vigilant, c. iii. alias, n. 7.

‡ "Either forgive them the trespass, or if thou do not, strike me out of the book that thou hast written." (Exod. xxxii. 31–2.)

§ Acts vii. 59. ‖ Acts xxvii. 33.

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are in possession of eternal beatitude? And if all the saints have in heaven a greater power of intercession, who will ever be able to measure the power and might of their Queen? The love borne her by the God who took flesh in her virginal womb, her sublime dignity of Mother of God, which, as we have said, lasts and will last for all eternity; the royalty to which she has been raised by the Holy Trinity, her position, as Mother of Christians, the graces of which she has received the fulness, her love for us, are so many unequalled prerogatives, which render her power of intercession unequalled in heaven. Hence the Holy Fathers and doctors unceasingly exalt that extraordinary power, and all, emulously striving to portray her wonders, rack their very intellect to glorify her. "If thou art silent," says Saint Anslem,* "no one prays, no one comes to our succor; but if, on the contrary, thou openest thy lips, all the saints pray with thee; thou art, after God, my only hope:† but for thee, I should have neither pity nor meekness, for thou art the Mother of virtues." "In vain," says William of Paris,‡ "in vain should we cry to the Lord, if Mary remains silent; our prayers, without hers, would be useless before God." "As no one goeth to the Son unless led by the Father," says a pious author,§ "so I venture to say, that in a certain manner, we cannot recur to thy glorious Son, O August Mother, unless thou guide us to him, by thy powerful hand." "When Martha, confessing Christ's power, begged him to recall her brother Lazarus to life, she was sent to Mary, her sister," says Saint Peter Chrysologus:‖ "and why, if not to

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* *Orat.* xlv. *ad S. Virg. Mariam.*
† *Ora'.* xlvi. *ad eandem.*
‡ *Lib. de Rhetor. divina,* c. xviiii.
§ *Contemp. de V. M.* c. i.
‖ *Serm.* lxiv. *de Lazaro amorte suscit.*

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show by that figure, that but for the Blessed Virgin, death cannot be overcome and routed ? "

In fact, from the moment when Mary conceived the Word of God, says Saint Bernardine,* she had, so to speak, a certain jurisdiction over all the temporal graces of the Holy Ghost, so that no creature ever obtained of God grace or virtue, except through the intercession of that pious mother.

We should never cease, were we to enumerate, one by one, all the expressions of the Holy Fathers, who show how powerful Mary's intercession is. To abridge, we shall merely say with St. Bernard,† that God has wished every grace to be given us by means of Mary. This idea was not advanced by the holy Doctor in a transport of love, but he often expresses it in his works, and particularly when he speaks of the wonderful threefold union of the Almighty majesty of God with our mortal flesh.‡ Saint Alphonsus Liguori, in his filial piety to the Blessed Virgin, is not satisfied with uphold-

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* Tempore a quo Virgo Mater concepit in utero Verbum Dei quamdam, ut ita dicam, jurisdictionem seu auctoritatem obtinuit in omni Spiritus Sancti processione temporali, ita quod nulla creatura aliquam a Deo obtinuit gratiam vel virtutem, nisi secundum ipsius piæ matris dispensationem." (Serm. lxi. cap. viii. Tom. I. t *Serm. III. de glorioso nomine Mariæ, art. 3, cap II. tom. III.*)

† Totis ergo medullis cordium—Mariam hanc veneremur, quia sic est voluntas ejus, qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam—Hæc, inquam, voluntas ejus est, sed pro nobis." (*Serm. in Nativ. B. M. V.*)

‡ This is to be understood not merely, as some pretend, in the sense that the Blessed Virgin, having brought forth Jesus Christ, has been the means by which we have received the author of all grace, but in the sense that God, in a particular manner, has wished to honor his most holy Mother. Saint Thomas, after having said (*Epist.* 8.) that the Saints, in proportion to the merit by which they have merited grace, may save others, affirms (*Exposit. Salut. Angel*) that our Redeemer and the Blessed Virgin have merited power to save all men. As to the sense in which we are to understand the proposition of Saint Bernard, it will be clear, if we consider the three marvellous unions of which he speaks, that is to say, the union of God and man, the union of Virgin and Mother, and, finally, that of Faith and

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ing Saint Bernard's opinion,* but with the authority of Holy Fathers, and by solid arguments, he answers those who oppose this pious proposition.† Adducing new reasons, he demonstrates to evidence that the gentle Doctor spoke no hyperbole, as some pretend, but wrote in a strict theological sense, and he concludes by saying, that his opinion is fortified by the constant practice of the faithful, who, to obtain any graces from heaven, always have recourse to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin; hence, the holy Bishop concludes, the opinion of the Church.

This powerful patronage, which our august Mother began from the outset of her earthly pilgrimage, she has in all times displayed in a special manner for the advantage of the

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the human heart. After having exposed this triple union he concludes: "But as thou, O man, wast unworthy of the gift, it was bestowed on Mary, that thou mightest through her receive whatever thou wast to have; for she as Mother bore thee a God; as a Virgin, is heard for her reverence in thy cause, and that of all men. Had she been only a mother, she would suffice for herself, nor would her womb have borne the blessed fruit which is the price of the world. As there is remedy in the former, so aid in the latter; *because God has wished us to have nothing that does not pass through Mary's hands.* But in the third is merit; for when we firmly believe these things, we have merit, and in faith there is salvation; for whoso believeth shall be saved."—"Sed quia indignus eras qui donaretur, datum est Mariæ, ut per illam acciperes quidquid haberes, quæ per hoc quod Mater est genuit tibi Deum; per hoc quod Virgo est, exaudita est pro sua reverentia in causa tua et totius generis humani. Si sola mater esset, sufficeret sibi, nec benedictus fructus ventris ejus mundi pretium esset. Cum ergo in prima sit remedium, in secunda adjutorium est, quia nihil nos Deus habere voluit quod per Mariæ manus non transiret. In tertia autem meritum est, quia cum hæc firmiter credimus, jam meritum et habemus, et in fide sanitas est, quia qui crediderit salvus erit." (*Serm. III. in Vigil. Nativ. Dom.*) This opinion is maintained also by Father John Crasset, of the Society of Jesus, in his book on Devotion to Mary.

* Glories of Mary. (Dunigan's Ed. p. 170.)

† Reply to an anonymous writer annexed to Glories of Mary. Muratori, in his treatise Regolata Divozione, published under the name of Lamindies Pritanius, opposes this pious opinion; but the paradoxical character of his work is well known.

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Church, whether we regard the succor she has ever given the visible head, the episcopacy, and the clergy, or consider the graces granted to the faithful; thence Saint Antoninus, commenting, in his *Sum*,* these words of Ecclesiasticus: "*My power is in Jerusalem*, affirms that the Church is not only under the patronage, but also under the domination and power of Mary, since, after Christ, she is the noblest of all, through whom God exercises in a peculiar manner his providence and mercy to man." History and monuments on every side attest this constant patronage of Mary over the universal Church. Never, in her fears or perils, has she invoked in vain the holy name of Mary. Who but the holy Virgin has overcome all heresies throughout the world? † Who has given the Church victory over her enemies within and without? Who but she has continually and visibly given aid and protection to the Sovereign Pontiffs?

Have not the faithful had recourse to her in all public and universal calamities, knowing her to be the only means of obtaining salvation and joy? The impious emperor Frederick wished to destroy the Church at a single blow, by preventing the election of a Sovereign Pontiff after the death of Celestine IV.; the clergy made a solemn vow to Mary; and was not Innocent IV., after a long interregnum, pro-

* In Jerusalem potestas mea, hoc est, in Ecclesia. Quia Ecclesia jure est sub pedibus Virginis, quia non tantum sub ejus patrocinio, verum etiam sub ejus est dominatione et potestate. Ergo cum sit pars secundum Christum omnium nobilissima, per quam Deus suam providentiam et in homines misericordiam particular iratione exercet, præcipue commemoranda videbitur.—My power is in Jerusalem, that is, in the church. Because the church is beneath the feet of the Blessed Virgin, not only by patronage but by dominion and power. As she is the noblest of all after Christ, by whom God in a special manner exercises his providence and mercy on man, she is peculiarly to be venerated.

† Gaude, Maria Virgo; cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo. (*In Offic. B. M. V.*)

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claimed in 1243? * Where did Paul II., in a horrible tempest, find a sure refuge, but in Mary's bosom? † How, after fifty years of schism, did Boniface IX. give peace to the Church, but by increasing devotion to the Blessed Virgin? ‡ What hands but Mary's, again and again, preserved from Moslem bondage the lands of Christendom, already overrun, or about to be? Who but remembers, among the vast number of victories, the signal one of Lepanto, beheld in spirit by the holy Pope St. Pius V., who had ordained public prayers? § What! have not all yet on their lips the glorious name of John Sobieski, who, attributing to Mary the victory won at Vienna over the Moslems, hastened to prostrate himself before her altar, and intone a hymn of thanksgiving? Did he not send the Sovereign Pontiff, who had prayed for victory, the standard of Mahomet, reserving for himself only an image of the Blessed Virgin, a statue found in the village of Wishan, and afterwards placed in the royal chapel of Zolkiew? And did he not bear that image with him in all his subsequent campaigns? To whom but to Mary did Pius VII. attribute his deliverance, and the peace given to the Church, which had for five years been held under the yoke of the most powerful and redoubtable emperor? ‖

If, from this general protection accorded to the Church

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* Baronius ad Ann. 1243.

† Molanus in *Addit. Martyr.*

‡ Baronius, *in Not. ad* 2 *Jul.*

§ Life of S. Pius V. in Butler.

‖ This immortal pontiff accordingly in 1816 instituted the feast and office of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Help of Christians; the sixth lesson of that office begins: "The Christian people have often experienced the most speedy aid of the Mother of God, in dispersing the enemies of religion." It then relates how by Mary's intercession Saint Pius V. won that famous victory over the Turks; and how, after five years' exile, Pius VII. was restored to his See. And have we not seen the same thing in our own day?

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by the Blessed Virgin, we descend to her protection over the faithful individually, we shall find none who has not often experienced its powerful effects. Saint Ephrem proclaims Mary the advocate of sinners, and of all who have no refuge.* Saint Thomas of Villanova calls her our only hope.† Sullied as a sinner may be, says Saint Bernard, if he but sigh to Mary, she does not loathe him, but extends her helping hand to withdraw him from the abyss of misery.‡ Who is more ready than Mary to help us? No sooner does she behold our misery than she comes to our aid;§ she takes wings to fly to our defence,‖ and, like a good mother, feels no repugnance for her child, although he is all disfigured by leprosy. Mary does not repulse the sinner, loathsome as he may be, since, but for this lamentable misery of the sinner, she could not use mercy.¶ By means of the ark,** Moses triumphed over the enemies of the Hebrew people; now his ark prefigured Mary, who obtains for us victory over the world and the demons,†† whose terror she is, says Saint Bonaventure;‡‡ indeed, how can it but be so, if, as Saint Bernard says,§§ all at Mary's name falls prostrate, if hell itself trembles at her voice? Is it in vain, then, says William of Paris,‖‖ that all the Church calls Mary the advocate and refuge of the wretched?

Never can our faults suspend in Mary this salutary office

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* *De laud. Virg.* † Serm. III. de Nativ. B. M. V.

‡ Tu peccatorem quantumvis fœtidum non horres, si ad te suspiraverit; tu illum a desperationis barathro tua manu reviahis. (Orat. paneg. ad B. V.)

§ Saint Bonaventure, *in Spec.*

‖ Novarinus. Alas sumit et Virgo in nostri auxilium advolatura.

¶ Richard of Saint Lawrence, de laud. Virg. Lib. IV.

** Numbers, x. 35. †† Cornelius a Lapide. ‡‡ Spec. Virg. c iii.

§§ In nomine Mariæ omne genu flectitur, et dæmones non solum pertimescunt, sed audita hac voce contremiscunt. (*Serm. super* Missus est.)

‖‖ De Ret. Div. cap. xviii.

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of mercy, because, after her divine Son, she is the advocate and mediatrix of men, the only hope and sure consolation of the afflicted. All the grace that is in her, all the glory with which she is adorned, her very dignity of Mother of God, if we may say it, all was granted to Mary for the advantage of sinners: her eyes, adds Richard of Saint Victor, are a mother's eyes. As every mother watches over her child lest he fall, or, if he fall, that he may instantly rise, so the Blessed Virgin ever keeps her eye of pity open on the sinner; and as all may in the fields reach the branches of the olive tree, and gather its fruit, so all, just and sinners alike, may rise to Mary, to obtain of her fruits of mercy.* What safer refuge is there than Mary's heart? † There the beggar

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* Ad olivam in campis omnes possunt accedere et accipere fructum ejus; ad Mariam et justi et peccatores possunt accedere, ut inde misericordiam consequantur. O quas sententias flagellorum propter peccata hæc sanctissima Virgo misericorditer revocavit. (St. Antoninus, Pt. III. tit. xxxi. c. iv.)

† Non est tutior locus ad latendum quam sinus Mariæ. Ibi pauper habet domicilium, ibi infirmus invenit remedium, tristis solatium, ibi turbatus consilium, ibi destitutus acquirit juvamentum.—Thomas à Kempis. To the authority of the Fathers and Doctors we may add that of the most illustrious poets. Suffice it to cite from them all the great Dante Alighieri. In the thirty-third canto of his Paradiso he says:

"O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son!
Created beings in all lowliness
Surpassing, as in height above them all;
Term by the eternal counsel preordained;
Ennobler of thy nature so advanced
In thee, that its great maker did not scorn
To make himself his own creation;
For in thy womb rekindling shone the love
Revealed, whose genial influence makes now
This flower to germin in eternal peace.
Here thou to us of charity and love,
Art, as the noonday torch; and art, beneath,
To mortal men, of hope a living spring,
So mighty art thou, Lady, and so great,
That he, who grace desireth, and comes not
To thee for aidance, fain would have desire

finds hospitality, the sick a remedy, the afflicted consolation, and the forlorn succor and shelter. Who can tell the fearful chastisements that she has so often warded off from the heads of sinners, the perils from which she has withdrawn them, the graces which she has obtained for them? Question history, it is full of prodigies wrought by Mary, both in the order of grace and that of nature. Is there an inhospitable land where her name is not blessed? Is there a hut where Mary's image is not crowned with flowers? Is there a hamlet that has not an altar consecrated to her glory? Who could affirm in truth that he never received grace or favor from her? Yourself, pious reader, would doubtless attest that Mary came to your assistance as often as you invoked her with faith.

Hence arises the general and particular cultus rendered to Mary by all the faithful, a worship sanctioned by the church, and which increases every day, so that the human tongue creates the sweetest and most sublime terms to invoke her; the heart seeks the most expressive means to pay her homage; the faithful rear her the most magnificent temples, and all display a noble rivalry to exalt on earth this sublime creature, by according her a veneration, a worship superior to that which they render to all other saints, in which she is inferior to God alone.

Fly without wings. Not only him who asks
Thy bounty succors; but doth freely oft
Forerun the asking. Whatsoe'er may be
Of excellence in creature, pity mild,
Relenting mercy, large munificence,
Are all combined in thee."

CARY'S translation.

Following the plan of the author, we cannot here forbear to cite Chaucer's imitation of Dante.

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Thou maide and mother, doughter of thy Son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful souls cure,
In whom that God of bountee chees to won;
Thou humble and high over every creature,
Thou nobledst so far forth our nature,
That no disdaine the Maker had of kinde
His Son in blood and flesh to clothe and winde.

Within the cloystre, blisful of thy sides,
Toke mannes shape the eternal love and pees,
That of the trine compas Lord and gide is,
Whom erthe and see and heven out of relees
Ay herien; and thou, virgine wemmeles,
Bare of thy body (and dweltest maiden pure)
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee Magnificence,
With mercy, goodness, and with swiche pitee,
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,
Not only helpest hem that praien thee,
But oftentime of thy benignitee
Ful freely, or that men thin helpe beseche,
Thou goest beforne, and art hir lives beche.

CHAUCER, *Second Nonnes Tale.*





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CHAPTER XI.

OF THE DEVOTION OF THE CHURCH TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH SHE IS HONORED.



A LEGITIMATE consequence of Mary's powerful intercession, is the care which the Church has always shown in honoring her in a special manner. If we are asked when this worship began, unable to specify the precise time, we shall, with the learned and pious Cardinal Bona,* say that it dates back to the

* Semper in Ecclesia viguisse, etsi cætera desunt argumenta, ex hoc potissimum conjicere licet, quod nullum ejus principium ostendi potest: nam nec pontificis alicujus decreto, aut concilii sanctione, aut consuetudine aliqua, cujus sciatur origo, introductus fuit; sed omni ætate, omni tempore, semper fideles cœli Reginam summo honore prosequi et venerari consueverunt."—"That the worship of the Blessed Virgin has always obtained in the Church may be conjectured, especially from this, that its commencement cannot be shown. It was introduced by no decree of a pontiff, no sanction of a council, no custom of known origin; but in every age and in all time the faithful have been wont to honor and venerate in the highest degree the Queen of Heaven." (De div. Psalm c. xii. § 3.)

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primitive ages of Christianity, the faithful having never ceased from that time to venerate and honor their immaculate Queen. In fact, there has even been a holy emulation between Mary interceding, and the Church rendering her a pious homage, a homage which she has earned so far as to decree her a particular worship called hyperdulia, superior to that rendered to the Saints, and inferior only to that of latria, or adoration paid to God alone.

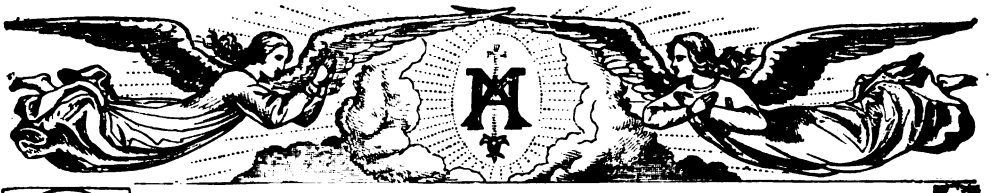
As we speak to Catholics, and souls devout to our Blessed Lady, we have no need of combating the calumnies and objections of Protestants and unbelievers, who accuse us of rendering to creatures the worship which is due only to God. Yet we will incidentally remark, that there is a great difference in the worship. The angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas,* teaches that God is adored for himself, by reason of his own excellence, while the saints are venerated on account of the excellence which God communicates to them ; so that it

* "Dicendum quod Deo debetur reverentia propter ejus excellentiam quæ aliquibus creaturis communicatur, non secundum æqualitatem sed secundum quamdam participationem. Et ideo alia veneratione veneramur Deum quod pertinet ad latriam, et alia veneratione quasdam excellentes creaturas quod pertinet ad duliam. Et quia ea quæ exterius aguntur signa sunt interioris reverentiæ, quædam exteriora ad reverentiam pertinentia exhibentur excellentibus creaturis, ante quæ maximum est adoratio. Sed aliquid est quod soli Deo exhibetur, id est, sacrificium."—"Reverence is due to God for his excellence, which he communicates to some creatures, not by way of equality, but by participation. Far different, then, is the veneration of latria which is offered to God, and the veneration of dulia paid to certain excellent creatures. And as exterior acts are signs of inward reverence, certain exterior marks of reverence are paid to excellent creatures, but adoration is far removed from this. One thing is offered to God alone, and that is sacrifice." (St. Thomas, 2, 2, quæst. 84, art. 1, § 1.)

"Devotio quæ habetur ad sanctos Dei non terminatur ad ipsos sed transit in Deum in quantum scilicet in ministris Dei Deum veneramur."—"The devotion to saints of God does not terminate in them, but passes to God, inasmuch as we venerate God in the servants of God."

St. Thomas had said the same in quæst. 82, art. 2.

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is indeed God whom we honor in his noblest creatures. Applying, then, this doctrine to the worship rendered to Mary by the faithful, every one sees that it is referred to God,* and that we honor the mother on account of the excellence which the Son has communicated to her, to use the very words of Saint Thomas.

Well persuaded of this truth, the Church, our infallible mother, neglects no means of honoring so sublime a creature. Should we attempt to enumerate all the acts of veneration which she has consecrated to her, strength and words would fail us sooner than the matter, so ingenious has the Church been in multiplying the honors rendered in all times and lands to the Mother of God; so that there is no class of the faithful but may share in the worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We shall therefore set down some of the principal acts of homage which the Church renders her, deferring to the next chapter to speak of some particular acts of piety towards that tender Mother.

In order to begin by the act of which the usage is the most ancient, we shall say, that the rituals furnish us several forms of litany and supplication. Now in every invocation the name of Mary comes immediately after that of God. Trombelli† shows that this took place not only in the

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* Saint Ildephonsus. *De Ill. Virg.* cap. xii.

† Trombelli, in the *Ricolta*, Venice, vol. xxxii., gives some litanies drawn from the fragment of an ancient manuscript. See, too, what he says in his Life of the Blessed Virgin, part II. diss. iii. cap. 11. He gives, among other things, these words, drawn from that fragment, "Ordo ad catecuminum faciendum: Facite signum in frontibus ejus, ita dicendo: In nomine Patris, et Filli, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. Catecumini procedant. Si quis catecuminus est, recedat. Omnes catecumini exeant foras. Filii carissimi, revertimini in locis vestris, expectantes (h)oram qua possit circa vos Dei gratia baptismo operari." Then follow: the Litany; Kyrie, III.; Christe, exaudi nos, III.; Sancta Maria, ora—Sancta Dei genitrix, ora—Dei mater et virgo, ora—Sancte Michael, ora.



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administration of solemn baptism, but even in private baptism.

These litanies were also recited in all private wants, and especially when a sick person seemed in danger of death ; * they were also recited in public calamities,† as is still done. It would be useless, then, to seek to confirm by examples what can be doubted by none.

But how pass over in silence the Angelic Salutation, so called from the first words which the angel addressed to Mary ? The ancient documents of the Greek ‡ and Latin § Church attest the antiquity of this prayer : and although it was not formulized absolutely in the same manner (some unessential words varied, and later, these words were added : Holy Mary, pray for us), it is nevertheless consecrated by the suffrage of many centuries. Our object is not to explain the privileges of a prayer so agreeable to our august Lady, as she has proved it by many miracles. Nor do we seek to adduce

* Consult the following fragment from the rituals cited by Trombelli. On Page 150–151 we find a litany that begins :

Kyrie III.—Christe, audi nos, III.— Sancta Maria, intercede pro eo (ea)—Sancta Dei genitrix, intercede—Sancta Virgo Virginum, intercede—Sancta Mater Domini, intercede—Dei mater et Virgo, intercede—Sancte chorus cherubim, intercede, etc. —Kyrie, (3 times)—Christ, hear us, (3 times)—Holy Mary, intercede for him (her)—Holy Mother of God, intercede—Holy Virgin of Virgins, intercede—Holy Mother of Our Lord, intercede—Mother of God and Virgin, intercede—Holy Choir of Cherubim, intercede.

† Martene (*de Antiquis Eccl. ritibus.* Book IV.) speaks at length of these litanies used in different epochs of the church. Now the Litany of the Saints and that of Loretto, are generally recited. The French especially have a great many litanies in honor of various Saints.

‡ In the Greek Church the Angelic Salutation is as follows: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, because thou hast borne the Saviour of our souls." These words are also in the Liturgy of Jerusalem, commonly called that of St. James.

§ See the Antiphonarium of Saint Gregory the Great, and the offertory of the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin, attributed to Alcuin.

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all the commentaries of the Saints and Doctors,* nor tell how the poets have often paraphrased it in verse, jealously rendering Mary this poetic homage.† We shall only remark, that Saint Pius V. ordered all the faithful to recite this prayer as it is in the breviary, whether bound to recite the divine office, or whether they said that of the Blessed Virgin.

This office, divided into hours and nocturns, like that prescribed to ecclesiastics by the holy canons, is to be attributed, says Baronius,‡ to Saint Peter Damian, who first introduced it among his monks: but others believe§ this prayer much more ancient, and they say that Saint Peter Damian only rendered its use more common by his example; and, in fact, soon not only clerics and monks recited it in choir, but also laics, thus wishing to pay greater honor to the Blessed Virgin.

If the universal Church recites the office of Mary only on certain determined days, she nevertheless fails not to invoke her particular aid as often as she recites the universal prayer

* All know the paraphrase of *Ave Maria* made in the eleventh century by Saint Peter Damian:

Ave, David filia, sancta mundo nata,
Virgo prudens, sobria, &c.

† It is enough to cite Dante; his translation of the *Ave Maria* was printed with others at Bologna in 1763, and in 1835 at Florence, by Fraticelli. We know that some maintain that this translation in verse is not Dante's; yet it is very ancient, and serves to prove our assertion.

The Abate Pelegrino Salandri, in a sonnet among those of his Litany of Loretto, has one, which is a beautiful paraphrase of the Hail Mary.

‡ Petrus Damianus, sicut auctor fuit ut in monasterio suo officium Dei Genitricis dicendum assumeretur, ita ex eodem fonte manasse dignoscitur, ut illud ipsum in toto Christiano orbe occidentalis Ecclesiæ non a monachis tantum et clericis, sed etiam a laicis viris atque mulieribus quotidianis pensis persolvatur, monente Urbano II., papa, ut suo loco dicemus." (*Ad ann.* 1056, num. 5. 6.)

§ Consult CARDINAL BONA, *De divina Psalmodia*, cap. XII. § 2.

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which the ministers of the sanctuary, in the name of the whole Church, make to praise, to thank God, daily for her benefits, and to implore new ones.*

Without mentioning ancient monastic liturgies, in which were prescribed prayers to Our Lady, who is ignorant that, by order of the same Saint Pius V., there is now always recited, in honor of the Virgin, one of the four more celebrated anthems? The *Salve Regina*, as Bzovius tells us,† was composed by Hermann, the monk surnamed the Hammerer, or according to others, by Saint Anselm of Canterbury.‡ The same Bzovius relates that Gregory IX., attacked by the Emperor Frederic, by impious arms and writings, ordered this prayer to be recited in certain parts of the divine office, in order to divert this furious tempest. The *Alma Redemptoris Mater* is attributed to the same Hermann, who, according to Durandus,§ wrote several proses preserved by the historians of the Church. The *Ave Regina Cœlorum*, which is also believed to be from the pen of the Archbishop of Canterbury, was chanted by the religious of the order of Saint Francis.‖ In fact, the rhythm of that hymn indicates that it was composed at the time when Italian poesy began. In fine the *Regina cœli*, notwithstanding what the Maurini say, is attributed to Saint Gregory the Great,¶ when, to arrest the plague which desolated Rome, he ordered a penitential

* Marchetti, *Treatise on the Divine office*, Part. I. numb. I.

† *Ad ann.* 1239.

‡ St. Anselm, Oper. I. Some attribute it to Peter, Bishop of Compostella, or St. Anselm, Bishop of Lucca, or Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims.

§ *Divin. Offic.* Lib. VI. c. lxxxix.

‖ In the Life of St. Bernard, prefixed to the third volume of the Venice edition of the works of the Holy Doctor, it is said that the blessed hermit heard it chanted by angels, and that Saint Bernard only propagated it. This is, however, denied by the more severe critics.

¶ St. Gregory the Great, *Oper. Tom. IV. Lib. I.*



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procession, in which a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin was carried. On that occasion, the same Pope heard the angels recite with that anthem the words :

Ora pro nobis Deum ! alleluia !

which were added by the holy pontiff.*

It is also related, that an angel appeared over Adrian's Mole, sheathing a sword of fire, and by this prodigy showing the amazed spectators that the scourge had ceased at last.

We acknowledge, however, that these anthems differ from those now recited, but not essentially, as each one may see by consulting the best editions of the liturgical works. Who can cite all the hymns and prayers which the Church addresses to Mary in the divine office ? Yet we will mention here the pious anthems the *Sub tuum præsidium*, and the *Sancta Maria, succurre miseris*, which the faithful are accustomed to recite, and which the Church particularly recommends to afflicted souls.

Not content with rendering to the Blessed Virgin the homage of which we have just spoken, and repeating her name several times in the Canon of the Mass,† the Church has also instituted *votive masses* in honor of Mary. By these masses she wished to honor God, to whom alone sacrifice is

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* Canisius *de Maria Virg.* lib. ult. sent. V. Baronius *ad ann.* 590.

† Communicantes et memoriam venerantes imprimis gloriosæ semper Virginis Mariæ, genitricis Dei et Domini nostri Jesu Christi, sed et beatorum apostolorum." —" Libera nos, quæ sumus, Domine . . . et intercedente beata et gloriosa semper Virgine Dei genitrice Maria, cum beatis apostolis tuis Petro et Paulo, &c."— " Communicating with, and honoring the memory in the first place of the ever glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, as also of the Blessed Apostles."—" Deliver us, O Lord, we beseech thee . . . and by the intercession of the Blessed and glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with thy Blessed Apostles."

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due,* by rendering him thanks for the benefits and privileges granted to the Blessed Virgin, and to pray Mary to obtain for us from the Lord, by her powerful intercession, the good things, spiritual and temporal, which we need. This custom is neither new, nor insulting to God, as the Protestants wrongly pretend; on the contrary, it dates back to the first ages of the Church, and it is most agreeable to the Lord; and certainly his glory is not lessened, but is even increased accidentally when we honor him in his saints. Now if this can be said of all the blessed, how much more of the Blessed Virgin, who is the Queen of Saints.

Who can enumerate the feasts decreed and established to Mary's glory? Besides those which we have mentioned in this history,† does not the Church celebrate the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin, of her Immaculate Purity, of her powerful patronage, consecrating to her several Sundays of the year, on which she joyfully invites the faithful to glorify the Mother of God, as the purest and most powerful of creatures?

What shall we say of the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, commonly called the Perdono of Assisium, in memory of the general pardon which Mary implored from her divine Son as the Blessed Francis contemplated? What shall we say of the feast of the Rosary, by which a Guzman prostrated the mad and haughty heresy of the men of Albi, and at the same time offered the Church a most powerful means of overcoming in all ages its most fearful enemies? Of the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, which recalls a Saint Peter Nolasco, leader of those gallant men proceeding so

* See TROMBELLI, *De cultu Sanctorum*. diss. VI. cap. xxxiii.

† Not to repeat what we have said, we refer our readers to the pages of the book where we have spoken of the other feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

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courageously to ransom those who languished in the fetters of the sorest bondage, so that poor and humble religious were seen joyfully presenting their free hands to fetters, and go so far as to give their life to ransom the captives? What shall we say of the feast of the Cincture, of that of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and of so many others, universal or particular, so numerous that we should have reason to fear that we would weary the most pious reader, if we attempted to treat of only the principal ones. Add to all this the churches reared in her honor in all parts of the world; shrines, some of which have been illustrated by signal prodigies, as if the Queen of Angels herself would show that she wished to dwell in those sanctuaries, and there pour forth plenteously her heavenly favors. Amid the thousand shrines consecrated to her glory, we cannot forbear mentioning the noblest pile of all, which is that Basilica of Rome, adorned with the most signal privileges, enriched with the most renowned relics, among which is preserved with so much love the cradle where the infant Redeemer of mankind uttered his first wailing. The wonderful prodigy of snow falling in August,* marked out this church from the commencement of its construction, and its history is blended with all the memorable graces which the Lord has in all time bestowed on the happy capital of the Catholic world. He might well count the stars of heaven, and the sands on the sea shore, who could merely enumerate the confraternities consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, which honor her by so many beautiful names, endeavor to imitate her virtues, and extend her worship, by celebrating her privileges and her glory. But we are already borne in thought to that Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of

* Benedict XIV. *De Festis*, where he speaks of the feast of *Sancta Maria ad Nives.*

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Mary, instituted at Paris in 1836 * in the church of Our Lady of Victory, and since spread over France and the world. There is not a nook on the earth where men honor not the images of Mary; who, conceived without sin, showers down the most abundant graces on those who confidently fly to her.

O Rome, thou wast thyself the witness, and thou canst proclaim thyself happy to remember the signal prodigy which took place in the church of San Andrea dei' Frati; a prodigy which filled the whole city with amazement, all good Catholics with joy, and of which the fame has spread to the remotest parts of Christendom.†

Not poetry alone wished to celebrate our august Lady's praise, and to offer, in all tongues and all ages, its tribute on Mary's altar; but the three kindred arts, united in holy emulation, were rivals in their love and devotedness to her. The greatest architects reared her magnificent shrines, which are the glory of the Byzantine, Gothic, or Roman art; the most illustrious painters and sculptors have all sought to leave us some precious images of the Mother of God; among these we shall recall to mind those of the Blessed Angelo of Fiesole, of Guido Reni, Carlo Maratta, and so many others, which, by their very appearance, fill the mind and heart with so great a devotion that it is a wonder to contemplate them. Hence we cannot sufficiently praise the delicate thought of Count Alexander Pallavicino, and the noble use which he made of his

* Pope Gregory XVI., in 1838, erected it into an archconfraternity, not only for France, but for the whole world. It is not to be confounded with that of the Sacred Heart of Mary previously founded at Rome, in the collegiate church of Saint Eustace, and which owes so much to Monsignore de Legne, prefect of ceremonies in the Apostolic palace.

† The miraculous conversion of Ratisbonne from Judaism, which took place January 20, 1842. (See *the Conversion of Ratisbonne, Dunigan*, 1856.)

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fortune: for he left all his property at his death to the Vatican chapter, in order to crown with a golden diadem all the statues of the Blessed Virgin renowned for antiquity of their cultus, for their many miracles, or the abundance of graces,* not only in Rome, but wherever the renown of their power extends. What, indeed, was more reasonable or proper, than to gird the brows of the Queen of heaven with those crowns which are the splendor and glory of kings? Can pearls or jewels meet a fairer use? Can gold or marble be better employed than in adorning her altars?

If we pay so much respect to the likeness of an earthly prince; if we array with such magnificence the palace which he occupies for a few years, what should we not do for the Immaculate Virgin, for the Queen of heaven, whose worship, we shall never cease to repeat, is exclusively and entirely for the advantage of the glory of God, who is sole master of all things? †

Let the infidel and the incredulous cease, then, to blame the homage which the faithful pay the Saints and the Queen of heaven: "Such works," says the venerable Bellarmine,‡ "are in themselves acts of virtue and religion, and the sign of many others. Whoso practises them, shows forth his faith, his charity, his piety, his gratitude to God; and as men ordinarily prefer gold to all, he who offers it to God proves that he loves God above all things. Moreover, these very ornaments more easily excite men to the acts of religion which are practised in the churches, better command the respect

* Trombelli has published a history of the statues of Mary, that have been crowned by the illustrious chapter of St. Peter's; but these statues are much more numerous now than then.

† The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. (Aggeus ii. 8.)

‡ *De Cultu Sanctorum.*

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due to holy things, aid piety, revive devotion, especially in simple souls, who are ever the most numerous."

Let us rejoice, then, at the pious zeal which the Church has ever shown in honoring the august Mother of God with a particular, and at the same time so universal a worship : and let us on our side endeavor to correspond thereto, sure of having made a great step towards eternal salvation, which is the only object of our stay in this valley of tears.



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CHAPTER XII.

WHAT CONSTITUTES TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

SINCE the Church, as we have seen, has ever endeavored to honor and revere the Blessed Virgin, we should also, on our side, try all means to obtain her love and protection. Following the holy Fathers and Doctors,* we not only, according to Father Suarez, show that devotion to Mary is a certain pledge of predestination, but even some heretics † (who would credit it ?) affirm, that to be wanting in love for the Blessed Virgin, is a sign of reprobation.

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* Saint Augustine, Saint Ephrem, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Saint Germanus of Constantinople, Saint John Damascenus, Saint Anselm, Saint Bernard, Saint Bernardine, Saint Thomas, Saint Bonaventure, and many others, are of this opinion.

† This is the opinion of Justus Lipsius, a famous Doctor of Louvain, of Oecolampadius, and other Protestants.

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But to gain the heart of our good and powerful Lady, will it suffice to show ourselves devout to Mary, to join some pious confraternity? Will it suffice to perform some acts of piety? Surely not; and this is a grave error into which many Christians involuntarily fall. "To be saved," says Father Crasset, of the Society of Jesus, "it is not enough to call one's self a servant of the Blessed Virgin, wear her scapular, or be inscribed in all the registers of her confraternities. Unless you do penance, unless you relieve the poor, unless you pardon your enemies, unless you frequent the sacrament, in one word, unless you observe God's holy law, for all your prayers, for all your zeal, in honor of Mary, your devotion will be like that which our Divine Redeemer reproved in the Scribes and Pharisees, calling them a race of vipers, and whitened sepulchres, because they confined themselves exclusively to certain exterior forms, and took no care to purify their hearts from the impurities with which they reeked."*

And would it not be a great error, to suppose that devotion to Mary is more efficacious for our salvation than obedience to her divine Son? What man of common sense can call such true devotion? Would it not rather be a delusion caused by the evil one?† Their outward homage is not then enough; and although it should not be neglected, for it may happen, as it has at times, that the merciful Virgin, touched with the homage, may obtain the conversion of a soul that practises them with a certain fidelity, yet we say generally that outward acts are not enough, and are often fatal; for they serve to lull souls in sin, and create delusions as to salvation.

* Tract I. quæst. XIV.

† Father Segneri. Il divoto de Maria, § 1.

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What, then, constitutes solid devotion? Each may, from what we have said, understand the meaning of the word devotion. Amid a variety of definitions, we readily adopt that of the Angel of the schools, for to prodigious learning he brought an admirable sanctity, and he is justly numbered among the most fervent and most enlightened servants of Mary. "Devotion," says he, "is the will to give one's self promptly to what pertains to God's service." * This premised, as we call devoted to his prince, his country, his God, him who labors with zeal and promptness, so true devotion towards the Blessed Virgin will be a ready will to do whatever may redound to Mary's glory and good pleasure. Now what can be more agreeable to her, than to behold us in the grace of her divine Son? What can cause her more grief, than to see us attached to sin? Long fasts observed in her honor, continual prayers, long pilgrimages, membership in pious societies, all these works are not, properly speaking, true devotion to the august Mother of God: at best, they are effects, if they proceed from that active will of serving her, or means, if they lead to it.

From this fundamental truth, it follows that our devotion to Mary should be a means to unite us to Jesus, our merciful Redeemer, true God and true man, object of all our worship, centre of all our homage, principal and end of all our desires. In fact, as the Apostle teaches, we have no task here below but to render ourselves perfect imitators of Jesus Christ,† because in him alone dwells the fulness of graces, virtues, and perfections; for we have been blessed by him and in him with benedictions of every kind. Our merciful Jesus is the

* Voluntas quædam prompte tradendi se ad ea quæ pertinent ad Dei famulatum. (Saint Thomas, II. 2. quæst. lxxxii. art. 1.)

† Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. (1 Cor. xi. 1.)

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only master who should teach us, the only Lord on whom we should depend, the only head to whom we should be united, the only example whom we should imitate, the only physician who can heal us; and, to say all in brief, he is the way that must lead us, the life that must quicken us, the truth we must carefully seek in our least actions.* As long as we are united to Jesus Christ, our perdition is impossible; and if we will abide with him, who shall separate us from his love? Neither the angels of heaven, nor the powers of earth, nor the gates of hell, as the Apostle says,† nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

If devotion to the Blessed Virgin, then, furnishes us the surest and most advantageous means for attaining this important object, it will be indeed a sign of predestination. But if, to suppose an impossible case, it removed us for a single instant from God, we should fly from it as an error fatal to our souls, as an illusion of the devil, our constant and implacable enemy, as a thing odious to the Blessed Virgin herself.

But knowing the end which we are to attain, all must see that Mary is the best way to arrive surely at God; and, at the same time, nothing can be more agreeable to God than our devotion towards her.

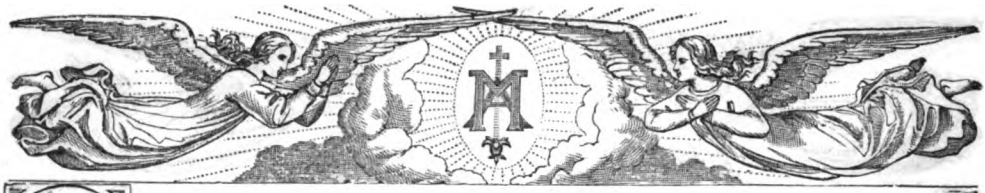
What indeed is our object in devotion to Mary, if not to render homage to that noble creature whom the Eternal Word deigned to choose as his real Mother? This honor rendered to the Mother redounds entirely on the Son.

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* I am the way, the truth, and the life. (John xiv. 6.)

† Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. (Rom. viii. 35, 38–9.)

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If the faithful honor with so much piety that poor cabin in which he opened his eyes for the first time to the light of day, that cradle where his infant limbs reposed ; if they have enclosed in the walls of a magnificent pile, the house wherein the Virgin conceived the Incarnate Word, and in which Jesus for thirty years led a hidden life ; if thousands of Christians come piously in pilgrimage to visit the spots sanctified by the foot-prints, and blood of the divine Master ; if we venerate with so much respect the nails that pierced his hands and feet, the crown of thorns that girt his sacred head, the cross on which he breathed his last sigh, the very cloths in which he was wrapped, the tomb in which he was for three days enclosed ; in one word, if it pleases Jesus Christ, that all the objects sanctified by his divine touch should receive our respectful homage, how can he but behold with joy the honors which we pay to his Holy Mother, to render her favorable to us in his presence ?

What part of the worship of the Blessed Virgin does not relate to God ? If we contemplate Mary's humility, purity, charity, and other virtues, is it not at the same time a homage rendered to that God who has raised to such a height a creature so faithful to his glory and his love ? If we address him our sighs and prayers, is it not at the same time to honor an infinitely good God, who has given us in her a tender mother, a merciful advocate, ever ready to aid us, and whom we see for this very motive, so glorified and so powerful in heaven ?

Whoever honors the Blessed Virgin with this noble intention of taking her as his model and guide, to be purified from his sins, to become like to Jesus Christ, and to render, in the person of the Queen of heaven, glory to God, who has so glorified her, will infallibly arrive at the port of glory. Mary will aid us to overcome our bad habits, if we have any, and



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to obtain the graces we need to attain heaven. O what joy for the Blessed Virgin, when she is thus invoked, honored, and served by us! Guilty as a sinner may be, whatever be the disorders of his life, and his separation from God, let him not lose courage; let him put his confidence in the Blessed Virgin; let him go with a pure intention to that good Mother, and soon, instead of being haughty, froward, blind, unchaste, he will become humble, mild, enlightened, chaste; of a sinner, he will become a saint. "God has given us this Mother," cries the pious Lanspergius,* "as a model of purity, and a sure refuge in our tribulations. Let none fear, or tremble to approach her; for this very reason was she endowed with so merciful, so mild, so charitable a heart, ever open to all and closed to none." If the sinner but bring the desire of amendment, he will certainly be aided by this tender Mother. But if, on account of his sins, he deserves not to be heard himself,† she who intercedes for him deserves to be. She herself revealed to Saint Bridget,‡ that she is ever ready to receive the repentant sinner: "Mary does not consider how much he has sinned, but with what intention he comes to her. She does not disdain to anoint and heal the sinner's wound, for she is called, and is the Mother of Mercy."

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* Matrem meam veneratione præcipua venerare. Ego enim mundo eam dedi in puritatis exemplum, in præsidium tutissimum, ut sit tributatis asylum. Quam nemo formidet, nemo ad eam accedere trepidet. Propterea namque adeo feci eam mitem adeo misericordem ut neminem aspernet, nulli se neget; omnibus pietatis sinum apertum teneat, neminem a se redire tristem sinat. (*Lib. IV. Min. op.*)

† Si merita invocantis non merentur ut exaudiantur, merita tamen matris intercedunt ut exaudiatur. (St. Anselm cited by St. Liguori, Glories of Mary.)

‡ Quantumcumque homo peccat, statim parata sum recipere revertentem. Nec attendo quantum peccaverit, sed cum quali intentione redit. Nam non dedignor ejus plagas ungere et sanare, quia vocor et vere sum Mater misericordia. (*Rev.* c. xxiii.)

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Having shown the essence and fundamental principle of this devotion, we shall examine what are the principal characteristics which it should have to correspond fully to its end. Our devotion to Mary should first be *interior*, that is to say, come from the heart and soul; which consists in having a great esteem for the Blessed Virgin, a high idea of her virtues, a sublime sentiment of her greatness, and in feeling ourselves drawn to her by a tender love. Now it will be easy to have these thoughts and feelings, if we remember all we have set down concerning the virtues, the sorrows, and glories of Mary. In the second place, our devotion should be *tender*. We should have the same confidence in the Blessed Virgin that children have in their mother; as little children in their most trivial wants run in all haste to their mother's bosom, so should we in all our wants, spiritual or temporal, run promptly to Mary with a true and entire confidence. As a little child in all times, all places, and in all things has recourse to his mother, without hesitation, without uncertainty, but in all the simplicity of its heart, so in every temptation, in every fault, in every tribulation, we should recur to Mary. We should come to her to be fortified in our weakness, raised up in our falls, restored in our fainting, consoled in our affliction. We should fly to her in all our pains, fearless of becoming importunate to so good a mother, and without any fear of displeasing Jesus, because, as Saint Bernardine * says, and as we have already shown, God wishes all gifts to pass through Mary's hands. In the third place, devotion to Mary should be *holy*. The service of Mary

* Ideo omnia dona, virtutes et gratiæ quibus vult, quando vult, et quomodo vult per ipsius manus dispensatur. "All his gifts, virtues, and graces, God dispenseth to whom he will, when he will, and as he will, through Mary's hands." (St. Bernardine, Serm. lxi. Tract. 1. art. 8.)

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should lead us to avoid sin with care, and imitate, as far as possible, her sublime virtues. We have shown that he cannot be called truly devout to the Blessed Virgin, who does not love her divine Son; and that he cannot be called a servant of Mary, when he does not devote himself to imitate her unequalled humility, her lively faith, her prompt obedience, her continual prayer, her divine purity, her ardent charity, her mortification in the least things, and her wonderful prudence. Alas, these virtues are not brilliant enough of themselves to excite us, in spite of us, to admire them and love them wherever we find them! We should offer ourselves to the service of the Blessed Virgin, resolved to take her as a model in all our actions. We should have her ever present before our eyes, think we hear her words, and behave in our tribulations and joy, as Mary herself would have done.

Our devotion should be *constant;* that is to say, last all our life. It should daily inspire us with new courage to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh. He who is truly devout to Mary, fears neither the temptations of hell nor the force of unbridled passions; faithful to Mary, he lives in the faith of Jesus and Mary, and puts in practice all that his holy religion teaches him. The Blessed Virgin obtains special graces for him who serves her with constancy. But if, by chance, he should happen to fall into sin, he will immediately rise, because Mary, knowing that the wretched one fell from human weakness, and not from a bad will, will eagerly obtain his pardon from her divine Son.

Finally, this devotion should be *disinterested.** A soul

* Although from the outset of our work, we warned our readers that we should say little of ourselves, that all should be taken from the Holy Fathers and Doctors, we cannot but avow that this chapter is drawn almost entirely from the Treatise on true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, by the venerable Father Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort, Missionary Apostolic.

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truly devout to Mary, should seek only God in his holy Mother. It should serve so august a Queen, not for a worldly, perishable interest, but for the spiritual delight which the service of so good a mother brings. We must render homage to Mary, solely, because she deserves to be honored, and because, by serving her, we serve at the same time our Lord Jesus Christ. God forbid that we should condemn those clients of the Blessed Virgin, who are excited to honor her by the joy which they experience in paying their homage to so amiable a queen; but he will ever be dearer to Mary, and much more perfect, who has no desire but to please her, amid sadness as amid joy and consolation, and who reveres and follows her whether he finds her at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee, or a prey to grief, and in tears on Calvary.

We are forced to avow, with great grief, that the number of these perfect clients of Mary is not as great as we should desire! How many shall we find constant? Alas! most undertake a thousand works of piety, which they almost immediately abandon; they change every moment, as the orb changes in the heavens, which we see represented motionless beneath Mary's feet. Many become clients of Mary to avoid a serious danger, to obtain an important post, to gain a suit, and, after obtaining the favor sought, soon show their unfaithfulness, repay her with ingratitude, and unworthily forget her.

We shall not speak of two classes, the opposites of each other: the former are those who believe nothing of Mary but what they read in the sacred writings. Not content with this, they blame the honors paid her, if these honors are not sanctioned by venerable antiquity or the infallible decrees of the Church. The others are the scrupulous, that is to say, those who fear they will be wanting in love and respect for God, by too



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great a devotion to Mary. We have, we think, explained sufficiently how our Redeemer should be the first object of our devotion to the Blessed Virgin ; the saints have always been full of piety to Mary, and have always considered her as the means, as the way to go to God, as our mediatrix, and not as our judge ; as her, who, full of compassion, will aid us before the Eternal Judge.

We shall say nothing of that devotion which we have from the first reproved, and which is all exterior ; such a devotion could only make hypocrites or presumptuous sinners. Such can never please Mary, and should not be numbered among her real clients ; that is to say, those who, remaining faithful to the Blessed Virgin, have every reason to hope that they will one day be in the happy number of the predestined ; for, as Richard of Saint Lawrence says,* "he who honors Mary, treasures up life everlasting, inasmuch as he who shall have honored her on earth will, as a reward, honor her in heaven." This is conformable to what the Church says, when she applies to Mary these words of Ecclesiasticus,† speaking of Wisdom : "They that explain me shall have life everlasting."

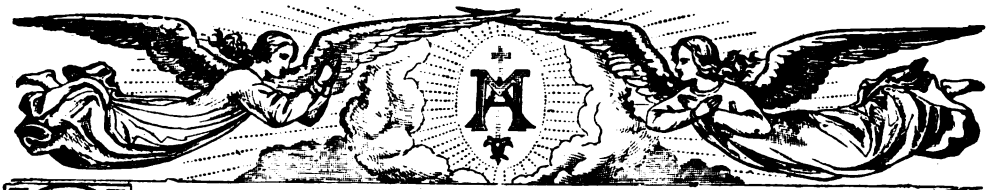
* Honorare Mariam est thesaurizare vitam æternam Honorificantes se in hoc sæculo honorificabit in futuro. (*De Laud. Virg. Lib. II.*)

† Ecclus. xxiv. 31.





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CHAPTER XIII.

A PARTICULAR DEVOTION BY WHICH ALL MAY HONOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN.



PAST all doubt, it is beautiful to join confraternities which purpose to honor the Blessed Virgin, to read her life frequently, to repeat her august name, to visit, as pilgrims, the celebrated chapels and churches consecrated to her; it is beautiful to recite the holy rosary, or the office composed in honor of the sweet name of Mary; to wear her scapular on our shoulders; to fast on Saturdays, and the eves of her festivals; it is beautiful to raise altars and churches in her honor; in a word, to do, in order to render her homage, all outward acts we can possibly imagine. But we have already said it, and we repeat it, that each may engrave it deeply in his mind—all this would be useless, if we take no heed to imitate her virtues by praying her to obtain for us this signal grace. Such has been the course not only of those whom we



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honor as saints, but of all who have wished to be her faithful servants; and thus, too, we should act ourselves to make devotion to Mary a sure pledge of eternal beatitude.

Now, to obtain this grace, to what practice shall we give the preference? What shall be the most excellent of all? As a beautiful and well cultivated garden derives all its value from the very variety of plants, flowers, and herbs which ever remain verdant, or bloom luxuriantly, in the various seasons, so that the passer-by stops in wonder to admire it; so the worship of Mary is rendered more wonderful and beautiful by this variety of practices, and there is not one, approved by the Church, but has its intrinsic merit, and is highly laudable.

Far, then, from counselling one more than another, we rejoice to see our holy Mother honored in so many different ways; let each follow that of which he has acquired the laudable habit, without undertaking too many practices, for fear of being unable to give all due attention. Under whatever name or title she is invoked, the Blessed Virgin is always the same; our homage is ever addressed to the Mother of God. Earthly kings glory in having numerous regiments, which, differing in uniform, age, stature, and name, all combined form a beautiful and powerful army: so our beloved Queen rejoices to see those countless files of Christians who, serving under her holy banner, all acknowledge her as their august Queen.

Let our beloved brethren then continue to honor Mary by the pious practices they have hitherto used; but to fulfil them better, we propose a means most useful to souls, and most agreeable to the Blessed Virgin. This means consists in proposing to ourselves the imitation of the Sacred Heart of Mary, in meditating on all its sentiments, all its aspirations, all its acts; to conform ours to them, so as to make her the mirror of our whole life. O how happy should we be,

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had we the slightest, most remote resemblance to so perfect a heart.

Who knows it not? That heart was never sullied by the least venial sin; purer than crystal, brighter than the lily, it was united to God by purity of intention, and the inflamed desire of the greatest sanctity; that heart was humble, recollected, exempt from all earthly affection, disengaged from self, kindred, earthly good, honors, riches; it found its delight in God alone, and never lost peace, although, as we have said, Mary's life was but a life of pain and sorrow, particularly from the day when the angel saluted her Mother of God.

Mary's heart was ever full of mildness, although she saw so many tongues rise against her most holy Son till they sent him to the scaffold; ever full of faith and hope, even amid a sorrow to which no other can be compared; it was ever inflamed with love for God, zealous for his glory, so tender towards sinners, that it never neglected its neighbor's salvation, and in heaven itself, where it is honored with so much glory, still exercises in our behalf its increased strength and power.

Who, then, would not approach Mary's heart? Who would not make it his joy and love to dwell in it? Should we not refer to that heart all our thoughts and all our feelings? *

* "Accedamus ergo ad te, et exultabimus et lætabimur in te, memores cordis tui. O quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare in corde hoc! Quin potius dabo omnia, omnes cogitationes et affectus mentis commutabo, jactans omne cogitatum meum in cor Domini Jesu, et sine fallacia illud me enutriet . . . Quis illud cor, tam vulneratum non diligat? Quis tam amans non redamet? Quis tam certum non amplectatur? Nos igitur, adhuc in corpore manentes, quantum possumus, amemus, redamemus, complectamur vulneratum nostrum . . . Stemusque ut cor nostrum, durum adhuc et impœnitens, amoris sui vinculo constringere, et jaculo vulnerare dignetur."—"Let us then approach thee, and exult and rejoice in thee,

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How could he who should meditate a little the thousand privileges of that immaculate heart, I will not say love sin, but be cold in God's service, not watch over his senses, and especially his eyes, those fatal windows by which death enters, and not protect that virtue which renders like the angels those who preserve it? Who would lose himself in the pursuit of perishable goods, which not only Saint Augustine, but the pagan philosophers proclaim viler than clay? Who will venture to fly mortification, obedience, resignation, humility, solitude, outrages, pains, sufferings, when Mary's heart gives us the most striking example of all virtues? What son could live in the joys of the world, and behold the grief of a mother who is all love for him, a mother who can and will aid him? We should require numberless volumes did we wish to continue to show how this imitation can be put in practice; but as there exist on this subject many books, written with as much learning as piety, we refer our readers to them, assuring them that they will derive great fruit from them. To render these practices more easy, it will suffice at first to propose the imitation of a single one of the virtues of Mary, commencing by the principal ones, as for example resignation, purity, patience, and passing progressively from one to another without ever stopping, like the

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mindful of thy heart. O how good and how pleasing it is to dwell in this heart! I will give all, I will change all the thoughts and affections of my mind, casting all my solicitude into the heart of the Lord Jesus, and without fail he will nourish me. Who will not love that wounded heart? Who will not return love by love? Who will not embrace one so certain? Let us then, remaining here in the body, love, love again, embrace our wounded one as much as we can . . . Let us stand that he may vouchsafe to bind on the fetters, and wound with the dart of his love our hard and impenitent heart." If Saint Bernard (*Serm. III. de Passione Domini*), speaks thus of the most loving heart of Jesus, may we not say as much of Mary, in consequence of the great resemblance of the two hearts?

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ardent runner who aims at the goal, and undiverted presses towards it his rapid steps.

Strictly the devout clients of Mary, at least the most fervent, should not only propose to imitate the heart of Mary, but also to consecrate themselves perpetually by a solemn obligation to this imitation, and thus united to Jesus in the heart of Mary, become like him as His holy Mother was.* To make our consecration entire and perfect, we must generously offer Mary all our senses, all the powers of our soul, all our spiritual goods, that is, our weak merits; in a word, we must give her, by an irrevocable act, all we have or can have on earth. From this perpetual consecration to the heart of our Queen we shall reap the fairest fruits. In the first place, the Blessed Virgin, seeing us thus weaned from ourselves, will offer to God in the most perfect manner, all our works, and we for this end will endeavor to do them with care, diligence, and exactness. In the second place, we shall not let our devotion

* Consecration to Mary is not a new devotion in the Church; we read in the life of Saint Odilo, abbot of Cluny, who lived in the eleventh century, that he was one of the first to practise it publicly in France. Saint Peter Damian relates that in 1036, Blessed Marin, his brother, made himself, in the presence of his spiritual director, a slave of Mary, putting a cord around his neck, taking the discipline, and putting on her altar some pieces of money. Continuing thus all his life, he was consoled by Mary in the hour of his death, and assured of eternal salvation. Bollandus mentions a knight, who, in 1500, devoted himself in the same way to the Blessed Virgin, a custom practised in private till the seventeenth century, when it became public. As all know, Father Simon Roras, a Trinitarian for the redemption of captives, preacher to the court of Philip III, put it in vogue in Spain and Germany, and we need only recollect that Cornelius a Lapide, after examining the devotion with other theologians, gave it unqualified praise.

The only object of this consecration of our heart to Mary is the imitation of Mary's heart, and the servitude of which we speak is that proposed by the venerable Grignon de Montfort, and has no resemblance to the devotion commonly called *Slaves of the Mother of God*, a devotion of which the pictures and medals are prohibited by the Sacred Congregation of the Index, to whose decrees we fully and ever submit.

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grow cold, because, having made of all we possess a perpetual and irrevocable donation to the heart of Mary, and knowing certainly that she will come to our aid if we are faithful to her, we cannot, without a great offence to her and injury to ourselves, revoke so solemn a donation. Finally, this consecration of ourselves to Mary embraces at the same time our consecration to Jesus, since we take the Blessed Virgin as a perfect means that Jesus Christ has himself chosen to unite us to him, our Redeemer and God, and consequently our last end.*

The motive which should excite us to make this consecration cheerfully, is that there is no function on earth, no honor greater than that of serving God. His servants are far nobler and more honored than the servants of the mightiest monarchs of earth; for, after all, the latter are only the servants of a man, while the former, by Mary's aid, endeavor to serve with fidelity Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords; a free, generous, and noble servitude, which Scripture calls a royalty.† Moreover, we act like Jesus, who, able like the first Adam to come into the world an adult, chose to remain shut

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* The venerable de Montfort says that this self-renunciation may be considered as a kind of renewal of the promises of baptism, in which Christians, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, vow to renounce the devil and his pomps, a vow, according to St. Augustine, "Our greatest, whereby we vow that we will remain in Christ." The Roman Catechism too teaches as follows: "It remains therefore that the pastor exhort the faithful . . . that we may know the strict obligation we, above all others, are under, of devoting and consecrating ourselves for ever, like faithful servants, to our Redeemer and our Lord." (*Art. 2. of the Creed. p. 37. Edit. Balt.*)

† "Libertate nobilior est servitus Christi."—"The bondage of Christ is nobler than liberty." (ORIGEN, in c. i. *Epist. ad. Rom.*) "O libera servitus, O servitium supra omnes dominationes eximium! quibus talis lætitia tribuitur, qualis in regnorum gloria non habetur."—"O free servitude! O bondage glorious above all dominion! What glory is not reserved in heaven, when such joy is given here." (CASSIODORUS in Ps. xlix.)

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up nine whole months in Mary's virginal womb, and for thirty years remain with her, submissive and obedient as the most loving and respectful of children. What, too, shall we say of the humility which we will have to practise continually, considering ourselves stripped of all and unworthy of every grace, and acknowledging that all good comes to us from Jesus through the hands of Mary ? *

And then, as Mary Immaculate, our Mother, is all love, sweetness and mercy towards us, as she will not be surpassed in generosity and liberality, what tongue, what power of eloquence can ever express the abundance of graces which she will shower on us, whom she sees devoted to her service ? When a soul is all Mary's, may we not say that Mary too belongs to that soul ? The pious Abbot Rupert, alluding to Jacob's triumph over the angel, says : † "O Queen, O Virgin Immaculate, Mother of God and man, not with my merits, but with thine do I desire to wrestle with the Man God." ‡

Our good actions are always poor and wretched, ever tainted by self-love and a thousand other faults of our weak nature ; these passing, however, through Mary's hands, are purified, embellished and adorned, thus made pleasing to God. Is it otherwise on earth ? When a man wishes to offer an humble gift to a powerful king, if he obtains the favor of having it presented by the queen, has not that gift, poor as it may be, a higher value in the monarch's eyes ? This favor, hard to obtain from earthly queens, is obtained with the greatest facility from the Queen of heaven : for full of love for us, she not only presents to her divine Son our

* See Book IV. c. x.

† He remained alone, and behold a man wrestled with him till morning. (Gen. xxxii. 24.)

‡ O Domina Dei Genitrix Maria et incorrupta Mater et hominis, non meis sed tuis armatus meritis, cum isto viro seu Verbo Dei, luctari capio. (*Proleg. in Cant.*)

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works, our desires, our thoughts, but induces him to accept them by saying all she can in our behalf: hence Saint Bernard says justly that every thing, trifling as it may be, should be offered to God by the hands of the Blessed Virgin.* Fear not that she will want good will, or that she will be repulsed, since she only wishes our good, and never met with a refusal from God, such as even the most loved queens on earth at times receive from their husbands.†

If we act thus: if during the whole course of our life, we faithfully do our work with the greatest perfection, considering ourselves as Mary's own property, as the exact imitators of her heart, we will have found an easy way to Jesus, since, aided by the Blessed Virgin, we shall find no obstacle to arrest us: a shortened way, for the straight way is the shortest; a sure way, for Mary removes all difficulties; and finally, a way that gives us the greatest interior liberty, that liberty of the children of God, and at the same time gladdens our heart by a firm confidence in God, through his most blessed Mother.

By serving our august Queen with love, humility, and fidelity, we are sure of victory; and happier even than Jacob, invited by Rebecca to follow her advice,‡ we shall reap the fruit of so good a mother's care; for she will present to God our works, poor as they may be, to obtain for us that blessing and those fruits which Rebecca obtained for her beloved son.

Let us then confide in Mary, in that new Eve, who, better

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* "Modium quod offerre desideras, manibus Mariæ offerendum tradere cura, si non vis sustinere repulsam."—"Be careful to offer through Mary's hands what you desire to offer, if you would not be rejected." (St. Bernard.)

† Profane history is full of examples of royal princesses who failed to obtain from their husbands or sons the favors which they ardently and anxiously sought.

‡ "Now therefore, my son, follow my counsel." (Gen. xxvii. 8.)

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than the first, desires to save our souls, since, as the angel of Hippo reminds us,* Eve brought tears, Mary joy; Eve bore the sinner, Mary the innocent one; the mother of our race brought punishment into the world, the mother of our Lord brought salvation into the world; Eve was the authoress of sin, Mary of merit; Eve injured us by giving death, Mary benefits us by giving life; Eve wounded, Mary has healed us." Happy, then, those who watch at the gates of the Blessed Virgin,† that is to say, according to the reflection of Father Segneri,‡ happy those who endeavor to obtain the three degrees of devotion to Mary. The first degree is to abandon sin for the love of the Blessed Virgin; for we have already said, that whoso is not in peace with the Son, cannot love the mother; the second, is to add some particular homage to this love; and the third is to imitate Mary as much as possible, because he who watches at the gates of a loved one spies all that she does, observes her actions, and seeks to follow her steps. Ten thousand times happy, if, imitating the heart of our august Queen, we aspire to become her faithful servants.

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* Eva lacrymas, Maria gaudium in ventre portavit, quia illa peccatorem, ista edidit innocentem; mater generis nostri pœnam intulit mundo, Genitrix Domini nostri salutem intulit mundo. Auctrix peccati Eva, auctrix meriti Maria. Eva occidendo obfuit, Maria vivificando profuit: illa percussit, ista sanavit." (St. Augustine, *Serm. XII. de Annuntiatione Dominica.*)

† "Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and awaiteth at the posts of my doors; he that shall find me shall find life." (Prov. viii. 34.)

‡ *Manna of the soul.* (5 Aug.)

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CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION OF THE WORK.

IF on commencing this work I was seized with fear at the thought of the grandeur, the immense extent of the subject, and the merit of those who had preceded me in that noble enterprise, I cannot now dissemble the pain I experienced in leaving a work which afforded me all my consolation and joy, because it kept me speaking constantly of my dear Mother, the Immaculate Virgin. Among the countless books which narrate the glorious life of the Queen of heaven, my work will doubtless occupy the lowest place ; but if the power of genius has not corresponded to my desire, this book is none the less a homage paid to her, of

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whom I glory in being the most affectionate and tender, though lowest and most obscure of servants.

I began to pronounce Mary's sweet and sacred name, when my tongue could scarcely lisp; that sweet name was my hope, my consolation in all the trials of life, and I will, pronouncing it, courageously depart this mortal life, fearless of the efforts and snares of my infernal enemy. No love of fame induced me to take up the pen, but the ardent desire of giving glory to Mary: I too have wished to lay a flower on the altar of the Blessed Virgin. One desire has impelled in this difficult undertaking: it was the desire of seeing my august Mother more known, more loved, more honored. If I have often said the same thing, though under a different form, it is because those who love are accustomed to speak constantly of persons dear to them, and praise endlessly, on every occasion, their virtues and their privileges. I have the confidence that pious readers will welcome with pleasure this work, continued by me amid the most pressing occupations, and to which I have cheerfully devoted all the time I could steal, not from other duties, but from lawful rest. More than once, in spite of the pleasure and interior consolation which I experienced while composing it, I should have been forced to abandon it, had I not been sustained, encouraged by those who had advised me to it, and had not the Blessed Virgin herself, to whom I commended me, lent me her heavenly assistance.

After this sincere avowal, I cherish the hope that my book will be favorably received, in consideration of the motive which has induced me to publish it.

But if, by chance, I have fallen into any involuntary error, I shall at once admit it as soon as it is pointed out: for it is the lot of our weak nature to be deceived, and the human mind can produce no perfect and irreproachable work; and although, in this book, nothing is mine except the mode of

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saying, since, as I had promised, all is drawn from those who preceded me, nevertheless, I have drawn from the best sources ; weighing critically, and separating dogma from what might be matter of discussion, I have followed in particular opinions those which seemed to me to be the best founded, or maintained by the greatest number of Fathers and Doctors, or at least by the most illustrious among them. Thus, as we have seen, Saint Anselm, Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, Saint Jerome, Saint Ildephonsus, Saint Ephrem, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Antoninus, have been my faithful guides, and I have especially followed the gentle abbot of Clairvaux and the Seraphic Doctor. I confess that I might have spoken at greater length of Mary, for she is like a shoreless sea, like an inexhaustible mine ; yet I think I have passed over nothing essential. If any one blame me for having spoken of one thing more than of another, I yield to condemnation, and have no wish to enter into discussion, because this is contrary to Christian charity and true devotion. I should keep silence, happy to offer Mary the reproaches that may be made for not writing her praises more worthily, as I should have desired. Although, sooth to say, I fear little reproach on this point, as my book is published with the approbation of the most renowned censors * in sacred science and literature : it has been printed at Rome, where I have been able to consult so many illustrious men on the least doubt ; and finally, it now appears under the auspices of Pius IX., who, encouraging and affectionately blessing me in the work, assured me of heavenly favor ; and if I may here speak of the devotion of that illustrious and venerated pontiff towards the Blessed Virgin, I should mention the filial love

* Canon P. Charles Vercellone, Professor of Divinity, and illustrious ornament of the Barnabite order.

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with which he labors to advance the glory of Mary, extend the worship of our beloved Mother, without speaking of the precious gifts sent to the church of Loretto, and his fervent prayers offered at the foot of the altars of the Blessed Virgin, especially during the year 1849, to implore peace in the horrible calamities which we have witnessed. But how can I neglect to mention that affectionate encyclical letter addressed to all the Bishops of the Catholic world, in which he endeavors to increase devotion to the Blessed Virgin, a devotion which, thanks be to God, is so popular? If the time has at last come to declare the Immaculate Conception a dogma of the Catholic Church, that decree, implored by the bishops, desired by theologians, hastened by the vows of pious souls, and, to say all in a few words, impatiently expected by two hundred millions of the faithful, will, at Mary's prayer, shower down (to use the words of an illustrious and pious cardinal)* the most abundant graces, the sweetest benedictions on Rome and on the whole Church, which regards Mary as her special protectress with God.

I cannot repeat it too often, I have not been able to speak worthily of Mary, who is a fathomless sea, a sun that dazzles our weak eyes. Such are her beauty and grace, that God alone can know her fully, and the more the human tongue speaks of her, the more remains to be said. We shall not well understand what Mary is, till we are in heaven with the countless army of saints, chanting her praises, and thanking her for the remarkable benefits which she obtains for us of God by her powerful intercession. We can say from experience, Mary has obtained for many, not a few secret graces. How many good inspirations! how many good works of ours!

* The Immaculate Conception of Mary, a polemical discussion of Cardinal Louis Lambruschini, p. 134.

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how many dangers avoided, through her protection, and all this for the salvation of soul and body!

O Virgin Immaculate, continue to pray for me, for all, and particularly for those who read these pages: accepted, welcomed, protected by thee, they will have a power that my words, my limited talent can never give.

I devote the rest of my life to speak only of thee, to think only of thee, to do all I can to make all love and bless thy holy name. I will daily pray, for this intention, in the adorable sacrifice of the Mass. O Mary, I wish the whole world to know thee, love thee, and honor thee.

What heart would be unmoved, knowing how the Blessed Virgin has labored all her life for the salvation of men, and that in heaven it is her hourly care, her constant solicitude? I might in this book, consecrated to her glory, speak of her miracles; if I have not done so, it is because they are so numerous that it would be easier to count the stars of heaven or the sands on the seashore. The history of the Church is full of them: the books in which they are collected are very numerous, and the greatest part of these miracles can defy the test of criticism. To the miracles, to the graces already granted, may Mary add another, and make the whole universe revere, love, and serve her.

The nations are in trouble: after so many ages, men call in doubt the maxims and principles which are the base of religious and of civil society, and by reason of our sins, the earth is menaced with greater chastisements. Divine justice, aroused by our iniquities, has raised above us the avenging scourge; we have already experienced it, and we may say that heaven, which wished to blast earth with its lightnings, has not yet resumed its calm: and yet the world repents not. We deserve still greater punishment for remaining deaf to the voice of God, and not returning to better thoughts, when

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that good Father showed us from afar, and then near, the chastisement reserved to us. We have acted like the mad mariner, which seeing afar the heavens overcast, the stormy winds rise, the waves toss in fury, and nevertheless dares in a frail bark to rush into the treacherous element, where he would infallibly have perished, had not a hand saved him from the peril to which he had exposed himself. That friendly hand is the Blessed Virgin's, who, while we were blind and lost, delivered us from misfortunes such as lips dare not utter, nor pen write, and the very picture of which fills our soul with horror. We cannot doubt but that she will deliver us from those that threaten us.

So sweet a mother, with such a predilection for Italy,* where her finest sanctuaries rise, and to which, by a signal miracle, angels have transported the very house where the Divine Word became Incarnate; so sweet and dear a mother,

* The translator ventures to give the following lines of a great American poet:

This is indeed the blessed Mary's land,
Virgin and mother of our dear Redeemer!
All hearts are touched and softened at her name;
Alike the bandit, with the bloody hand,
The priest, the prince, the scholar and the peasant,
The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer,
Pay homage to her as one ever present!
And even as children who have much offended
A too indulgent father, in great shame,
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended
To go into his presence, at the gate
Speak with their sister, and confiding wait
Till she goes in before and intercedes;
So men repenting of their evil deeds,
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near
With their requests an angry father's ear,
Offer to her their prayers and their confession,
And she for them in heaven makes intercession.
And if our faith had given us nothing more
Than this example of all womanhood,
So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,
This were enough to prove it higher, truer,
Than all the creeds the world had known before.

LONGFELLOW.

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whose name will be ever on my lips and in my heart, will take Italy under her especial protection, and regarding it as her own domain, will never permit that land to lose religion, which has ever been its fairest privilege and noblest glory; but that she will yet make Italy the example and model of all Christian nations, carefully preserving the sacred deposit of the faith, and in word and deed showing herself the loving follower of Jesus, the zealous guardian of his doctrine, and piously putting it in practice.

With perfidious arts men now endeavor to rob our beloved Italy of the blessing of true religion; they use every stratagem to deprive her of so fair a prerogative, and to accomplish their criminal design, they make a war on the Gospel, the more dangerous as the arms are apparently less terrible; they employ means most capable of seducing and corrupting the hearts of the young; they invite the nations to a felicity which never can be realized on earth, which must ever feel the bitter effect of man's primeval sin,* and on which must ever remain the menace pronounced on our first father and all his posterity; and this without considering the actual sins which are daily committed, and call down well-deserved punishment upon us. May the Blessed Virgin, true seat of wisdom, enlighten these poor blinded men, and may her noblest triumph be the conversion of the seducer and the seduced! Mary's power is not lessened, and the greater man's boldness and blindness, the more brilliant and glorious will her triumph be.

Let us especially pray our august Mother to turn her eyes of mercy on that city, which, fertilized by the blood of the prince of the apostles and an infinity of martyrs, become the

* "And to Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life." (Gen. iii. 17.)

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seat of the visible head of the Church, the mistress of truth, the immortal mistress of the world, far more than in the days of her pagan greatness, is called in figure not only the city of faith, but the city of Mary.

Let us all with one voice implore our august Queen to pour out abundantly on Rome her choicest graces, and thus show the world the daily more beautiful spectacle of its faith, of which even in his time the Apostle said, "I give thanks to my God, through Jesus Christ, because your faith is spoken of in the whole world." *

O Mary, if thou protectest that illustrious and beloved Pontiff Pius IX., elected in a few hours by the venerable Fathers assembled in the Quirinal, sent by God to accomplish his greatest designs, and who, in the long line of the Vicars of Jesus Christ, will be celebrated and glorious, for he belieth not the piety of his most glorious predecessors, nor their constancy in the hour of trial—O Mary, restore him to that Rome which seeks him, desires and sighs after him ; to that Rome which sees the ancient splendor of the Vatican extinguished, now that the Sovereign Pontiff no longer fills it with his holy majesty! Pius IX. constantly raises to the Lord his apostolic hands ; he prays with deep groanings, in that Neapolitan city † which has given him hospitality, and where a pious and powerful monarch, worthy of being counted among the noblest defenders of the Christian religion, has welcomed him, by lavishing on him the most respectful homage, the most tender care ; for if I can employ the profane comparison, he regards His Holiness as the palladium of his kingdom : and yet the successor of Saint Peter is in an abode which is not his, and seven-hilled Rome, like desolate Jerusalem,

* Romans i. 8. † Gaeta.

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mourns and weeps, deprived of her prince, her father, her master, her friend, of him who is her all.

O Mary, protect him, obtain for him a long life, defend him against all his enemies, because thou art like an army set in array ; take too under thy protection the Sacred College of Cardinals, those solid columns of Holy Church, who by their faith, their eminent piety, their wisdom, and countless other virtues, are the support and ornament of religion. Give strength and courage to the venerable Bishops, who, scattered from pole to pole, have received a mission from the Holy Ghost to feed the faithful and govern the Church ; obtain for them the light and strength they need for the great work begun by the Apostles and continued by them—the salvation of souls. O Mary, regard with a favorable eye, and take under thy heavenly mantle all the ministers of the sanctuary, whether they endeavor to maintain and increase the faith among Catholics, or bear the light of the gospel to remote and inhospitable lands. Preserve those virgins who, in sacred cloisters, preserve the fragrant flower of virginity, and will one day adorn thy glorious choir, and follow whithersoever he goeth the Lamb without spot, who feedeth among the lilies. Protect us all, O Blessed Virgin, that after this mortal life we may enter into that true life which is accorded in heaven to thy faithful servants.

There are two lives, says Saint Augustine ; * the one in

* "Duas vitas sibi divinitus prædicatas et commendatas novit Ecclesia ; quarum una est in fide altera in specie ; una in tempore peregrinationis, altera in æternitate mansionis ; una in labore, altera in requie ; una in via, altera in patria ; una in opere actionis, altera in mercede contemplationis. Una declinat a malo et facit bonum, altera non habet a quo declinet malum, et magnum habet quo fruatur bonum ; una cum hoste pugnat, altera sine hoste regnat. Una subvenit indigenti, altera ibi est ubi nullum invenit indigentem. Una aliena peccata, ut sua sibi ignoscantur, ignoscit ; altera nec patitur quod ignoscat, nec facit quod poscat

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faith, the other in enjoyment; one in the time of our pilgrimage, the other in the eternity of our abode; one in labor, the other in repose; the one in our pilgrimage, the other in our home; the one in the labor of action, the other in the reward of the contemplation of God; the one withdraws from evil and does good, the other knows not the evil, and is in itself a great good; the one combats the enemy, the other reigns, and has no enemy to fear; the one succors the needy, the other knows no need; the one pardons the sins of others, that its own may be pardoned, the other knows not that pardon, because it knows no offence; the one is scourged by evils that it may not become proud in good, the other enjoys such an abundant fulness of grace that it is exempt from all evil, and, without any temptation of pride, can attach itself to the sovereign good. One, then, is good, but still wretched; the other better and blessed."

To this last life we aspire, O Blessed Virgin; and the reward will not deceive our desires, if, as we hourly promise, we serve thee with courage, and have recourse to thee in all our wants, for thou art our good Mother. Thou art, we say with Saint Ildephonsus,* our protectress, our lady, our sover-

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ignosci. Una flagellatur malis, ne extollatur in bonis; altera tanta plenitudine gratiæ caret omni malo, ut sine ulla tentatione superbiæ cohæreat summo bono. Ergo una bona est, sed adhuc misera; altera melior et beata." (St. Augustine, *Tract.* cxxiv. *in Joan.*)

* "Domina mea atque dominatrix mea, dominans mihi, mater Domini mei, ancilla Filii tui, nec non et spiritum Redemptoris mei, ut de te vera et digna sapiam, vera et digna loquar, vera et digna quæcunque sunt diligam. Tu enim es electa a Deo, assumpta a Deo, advocata a Deo, proxima Deo, adhærens Deo, conjuncta Deo. Visitata ab angelo, salutata ab angelo, benedicta ab angelo, beatificata ab angelo. Ecce beata tu inter mulieres, integra inter puerperas, domina inter ancillas, regina inter sorores. Ecce ex hoc beatam te dicent omnes vates, beatam te celebrant omnes nationes. Beata tu fidei nostræ, beata tu animæ nostræ, beata dilectioni nostræ, beata præconiis et prædicationibus meis." (St. Ildephonsus, *Lib. de Virginit. B. Mariæ.*)

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THE THREE MARIES.

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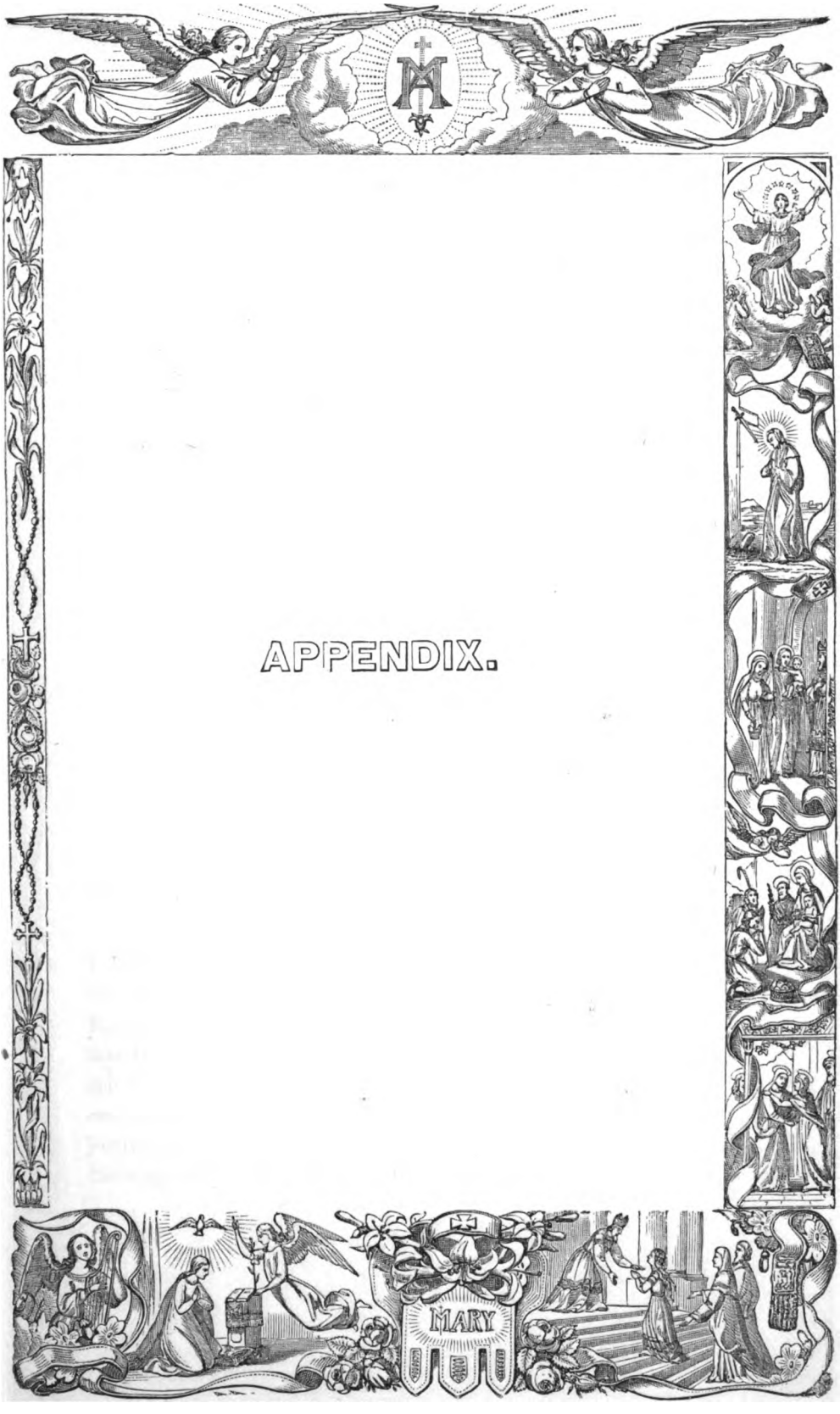
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eign, the Mother of our God, the handmaid of thy divine Son, the Mother of the Creator of the world ; obtain for us to have the spirit of thy Son, our divine Redeemer, in order that we may ever think, feel, speak and love what is worthy of thee. For thou art the elect of God, assumed by God, called by God, nearest to God, adhering to God, united to God—visited by an Angel, saluted by an Angel, blessed by an Angel, beatified by an Angel. Lo, thou art blessed among women, Virgin among mothers, lady among handmaids, Queen among sisters ! Lo, from thenceforth all prophets shall call thee blessed, all nations declare thee blessed. Blessed art thou to our faith, blessed art thou to our mind, blessed art thou to our love, blessed art thou to my praises and discourses." Hence I rejoice again at the humble homage which I have sought to render thee in these pages, in this poor account of thy life.

Hail, Mary, Virgin, Throne of God, ornament, glory and firmament of the Church. Intercede for us ever with Jesus thy divine Son, our Lord, that through thee we may find mercy in the fearful day of judgment, and obtain the eternal reward laid up for those who, loving and serving God, serve thee also. O Mary, thou art our only hope, our only stay, after our merciful Redeemer, and we await with the liveliest impatience the moment when, after having desired, loved, honored and sought thee on earth, we shall eternally contemplate thee in heaven, where we shall be enabled to know that incomparable beauty, that abundance of graces and blessings by which thou hast become Queen of heaven and earth. Amen.

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APPENDIX.

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REMARKS.

Since the publication of the elegant and devout work of Monsignor Gentilucci, a new jewel has been placed in the diadem of Our Lady. The eighth of December, 1854, will stand as an epoch in the history of the Church, for on that festival his Holiness Pope Pius IX., yielding to the almost unanimous request of the prelates of the Catholic world, pronounced in the presence of two hundred Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops, assembled from every quarter of the globe, the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, of which we annex a copy, and which declares and defines as an article of faith, the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God.

The prelates of the various climes, in solemn procession to the Dome of Peter to listen to the words of the successor of Peter, recalled the earlier councils of the Church, and especially that of Ephesus, which, coeval with St. Patrick's mission to Ireland, declared that Mary could justly be styled Mother of God. Now no impugner appeared; the prelates with the clergy and faithful heard with deep emotion the decree that now declared as of faith, that Mary could justly be styled "Conceived without sin," and as the letter, borne on the wings of the press, reached each corner of the globe, all read with

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reverence and love and thanksgiving the solemn decision of the Vicar of the Son of God.

Even as a commentary on this glorious Bull, the Life by Gentilucci will be a prize to every devout Catholic; the figures applied by the Fathers to the Blessed Virgin, as cited in the text of the Pontifical decree, will all be found explained by the illustrious prelate in the Life, as well as the detail of the grounds which had induced the definition, and by which Catholic theologians had been wont to prove the belief which has now become a dogma.





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LETTERS APOSTOLIC

OF OUR MOST HOLY LORD

PIUS IX.,

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE, POPE,

DOGMATICALLY DEFINING THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD.

PIUS, BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

FOR A PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE THEREOF.

GOD, who is ineffable, whose ways are mercy and truth, whose will is omnipotence, and whose "wisdom reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly," when from all eternity he foresaw the most mournful ruin of the whole human race entailed by Adam's transgression, and when, by a mystery for ages hidden, he resolved to complete the first work of his goodness by the Incarnation of the Word, in a more recondite sacrament (so that man led into sin by the craft of the devil's iniquity might not against his merciful design be lost), and in order to raise up more happily in the second Adam what had fallen in the first;—God, from the beginning and before ages began, chose, and ordained for his

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only-begotten Son a mother, of whom made flesh he might in the blessed fulness of time be born, and loved her above all creatures with so great love, that in her alone by his most direct will he was well pleased. Wherefore he so wonderfully enriched her far above all angelical spirits and all saints, with the abundance of all heavenly gifts drawn from the treasure of the divinity, that she, ever utterly free from all stain of sin, and all fair and perfect, might display that fulness of innocence and sanctity, than which under God none is conceivable, and which none but God can attain in thought. And truly it was most becoming that she should ever be effulgent, adorned with the splendors of most perfect holiness, and that, perfectly free from the stain of original sin, she should win a most complete triumph over the ancient serpent,—she, that most venerable Mother, to whom God so decreed to give his only Son, whom, begotten of himself, he loved as himself with his whole heart, that the same identical person should naturally be alike the Son of God the Father, and the Son of the Virgin, and whom the Son himself chose to make substantially His Mother, and of whom the Holy Ghost willed and by His operation made, that He from whom He himself proceeds should be conceived and born.

Which original innocence of the august Virgin agreeing completely with her admirable holiness, and her most exalted dignity of Mother of God, the Catholic Church, which ever taught by the Holy Ghost is the pillar and ground of truth, as possessing a doctrine received from God and comprehended in the deposit of heavenly revelation, has never ceased in manifold ways and by splendid deeds to explain, propose, and cherish daily more and more. For this doctrine, flourishing from the most ancient times, and implanted in the minds of the faithful, and by the care and zeal of the Holy Pontiffs wonderfully propagated, the Church herself has most clearly

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pointed out when she did not hesitate to propose the conception of the same Virgin to the public devotion and veneration of the faithful. By which illustrious act she pointed out the Conception of the Virgin as singular, wonderful, and very different from the origin of the rest of mankind, and to be venerated as entirely holy, since the Church celebrates by festivals only what is holy. And therefore she has been wont to use not only in the offices of the Church, but also in the holy sacrifice, the very words wherein the Holy Scriptures speak of the uncreated Wisdom, and represent his eternal origin, and to apply them to the origin of that Virgin, which was preordained by one and the same decree with the Incarnation of the divine Wisdom.

But though all these things almost universally received among the faithful show with what zeal the Roman Church, the mother and mistress of all churches, has supported the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, yet the illustrious acts of this Church are evidently worthy of being reviewed in detail; since so great is the dignity and authority of the same Church, so much is due to her who is the centre of Catholic truth and unity, in whom alone religion has been inviolably guarded, and from whom it is right that all the other churches should receive the tradition of faith. Therefore the same Roman Church had nothing more at heart than to assert in every most eloquent way, guard, promote, and vindicate the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, its cultus and doctrine. This is most openly attested and proclaimed by many illustrious acts of the Roman Pontiffs our predecessors, to whom, in the person of the prince of the Apostles, was divinely committed by Christ our Lord the supreme care and power of feeding the lambs and the sheep, of confirming the brethren, and of ruling and governing the universal Church.



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Indeed, it has been the great glory of our predecessors to institute in the Roman Church, by their own Apostolic authority, the Feast of the Conception, and to augment, ennoble, and promote by every means the once instituted cultus by a proper office and a proper mass, wherein the prerogative of immunity from hereditary stain was most manifestly asserted; to increase it either by indulgences granted, or by permission given to states, provinces and kingdoms, to choose as their patron the Mother of God, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, or by approved sodalities, congregations and religious orders instituted in honor of the Immaculate Conception; or by praises given to the piety of those who have erected monasteries, hospitals, or churches under the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. Above all, they rejoiced to ordain that the Feast of the Conception should be celebrated through the whole Church in the same manner and form as that of the Nativity; and in fine, that the said feast of the Conception should be celebrated with an octave by the universal Church, and to be piously kept by all among those of precept: and also that a Pontifical service should be annually performed on the day of the Virgin's Conception in our Patriarchal Liberian Basilica. Desirous, too, to cherish more each day in the minds of the faithful this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, and to excite their piety in worshipping and venerating the Virgin conceived without original sin, they have most joyfully and freely permitted the Immaculate Conception of the same Virgin to be proclaimed in the Litany of Loretto, and in the very preface of the Mass, that thus the law of faith should be established by the very law of supplication. We ourselves treading in the footsteps of so many predecessors, have not only received and approved what had been most wisely and piously established, and appointed by them, but also mind-

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ful of the institution of Sixtus IV., we have confirmed by our authority a proper office of the Immaculate Conception, and have most joyfully permitted its use throughout the universal Church.

But whereas all that pertains to worship is evidently bound by a close tie to its object, and cannot be fixed and determined if it be doubtful and uncertain, therefore our predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, increasing with all their care the worship of the Conception, studied most especially to declare and inculcate its object and doctrine; for they taught clearly and openly that the festival was celebrated for the Conception of the Virgin, and they proscribed as false and most foreign to the intention of the Church the opinion of those who considered and affirmed that it was not the Conception itself, but the sanctification, to which devotion was paid by the Church. Nor did they think of treating more indulgently those who, in order to weaken the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, drawing a distinction between the first and second instant and moment of the Conception, asserted that the Conception was indeed celebrated, but not for the first instant and moment; for our predecessors themselves thought it their duty to protect and defend with all zeal both the feast of the Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, and the Conception from the first instant as the true object of devotion. Hence the words, evidently decretive, in which Alexander VII. declared the true intention of the Church, saying: "Truly ancient is the piety of the faithful of Christ towards His Most Blessed Mother the Virgin Mary, who believe that her soul, in the first instant of creation, and of infusion into the body, was by a special grace and privilege of God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ her Son the Redeemer of mankind, preserved free from the stain of original sin, and in this sense they keep



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and celebrate with solemn rites the Festival of her Conception."

Our same predecessors held it most especially a duty to preserve inviolate the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, with all care, zeal, and attention. For not only have they never suffered that this doctrine should ever be censured or traduced in any way, or by any one, but they have gone much farther, and in clear declarations on repeated occasions they have proclaimed that the doctrine in which we confess the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin is, and by its own merits, held evidently consistent with Ecclesiastical worship, that it is ancient and nearly universal, and such as the Roman Church has undertaken to cherish and protect, and, above all, worthy to be placed in its sacred liturgy and its solemn prayers. Nor content with this, in order that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin should remain inviolate, they have most severely prohibited the opinion adverse to this doctrine to be defended either in public or in private, and they have wished to crush it, as it were, by repeated blows. To which reiterated and most clear declarations, lest they might appear empty, they added a sanction; all which things our illustrious predecessor, Alexander VII., embraced in these words:—

"We, considering that the Holy Roman Church solemnly celebrates the festival of the Conception of the Immaculate and Ever-Blessed Virgin, and has appointed for this a special and proper office according to the pious, devout, and laudable institution which emanated from our predecessor, Sixtus IV., and wishing, after the examples of the Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, to favor this laudable piety and devotion, and festival, and the reverence shown towards it, never changed in the Roman Church since the institution of the worship itself; also in order to protect the piety and devotion of ven-

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erating and celebrating the Most Blessed Virgin, preserved from original sin by the preventing grace of the Holy Ghost, and desiring to preserve in the flock of Christ unity of spirit in the bond of peace, appeasing contest and strife, and removing scandals ; at the instance and prayers of the said Bishops, with the Chapters of their churches, and of King Phillip and his kingdoms,— We renew the constitutions and decrees issued by the Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, and especially by Sixtus IV., Paul V., and Gregory XV., in favor of asserting the opinion that the soul of the Blessed Virgin, in its creation and infusion into the body, was endowed with the grace of the Holy Ghost, and preserved from original sin ; likewise, also, in favor of the festival and honor of the same Virgin Mother of God, celebrated according to that pious belief which is recited above, and we command that it shall be observed under the censures and punishments contained in the same constitutions.

"And against all and each of those who proceed to interpret the aforesaid constitutions or decrees so that they may frustrate the favor shown through these to the said belief, and to the festival or worship celebrated according to it, or who endeavor to call into dispute the same belief, festival, or worship, or against these in any manner, either directly or indirectly, and on any pretext, even that of examining the grounds of defining it, or of explaining or interpreting the Sacred Scriptures or the Holy Fathers or Doctors ; in fine, who should dare, under any pretext or on any occasion whatsoever, to say either in writing or in speech, to preach, to treat, to dispute, by determining or asserting any thing against these, or by bringing arguments against them and leaving these arguments unanswered, or by expressing dissent in any other possible manner ; besides the penalties and censures contained in the constitutions of Sixtus IV., to which we declare

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them subject, and by these presents do subject them: We will that they should be deprived *ipso facto*, and without other declaration, of the faculty of preaching, of lecturing in public, or of teaching and interpreting, and also of the right of choosing or being chosen to office; from which censures they cannot be absolved, nor obtain dispensation, unless from us, or our successors, the Roman Pontiffs; likewise, we wish to subject, and we hereby do subject, the same persons to other penalties to be inflicted at our will, and at that of the same Roman Pontiffs, our successors, renewing the constitutions or decrees of Paul IV., and Gregory XV., above referred to.

"And we prohibit, under the penalties and censures contained in the Index of Prohibited Books, and we will and declare that they should be esteemed prohibited *ipso facto*, and without other declaration, books in which the aforesaid belief and the festival or devotion celebrated according to it is called into dispute, or in which any thing whatever is written or read against these, or lectures, sermons, treatises, and disputations against the same, published after the decree of Paul V. above mentioned, or to be published at any future time."

All are aware with how much zeal this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God has been handed down, asserted and maintained by the most distinguished religious orders, the most celebrated theological academies, and the most eminent doctors of the science of Divinity. All know likewise how anxious have been the Bishops openly and publicly to profess, even in the ecclesiastical assemblies, that the Most Holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, by virtue of the foreseen merits of Christ our Lord the Saviour of mankind, never lay under original sin, but was preserved free from the original stain, and thus was redeemed in a more

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sublime manner. To which, lastly, is added this fact, most grave, and, in an especial manner, most important of all, that the Council of Trent itself, when it promulgated the dogmatic decree concerning original sin, in which, according to the testimonies of the Sacred Scriptures, of the Holy Fathers, and of the most approved councils, it determined and defined that all mankind are born under original sin ; solemnly declared, however, that it was not its intention to include in the decree itself, and in the amplitude of its definition, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Indeed, by this declaration, the Tridentine Fathers sufficiently asserted, according to the times and the circumstances of affairs, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from the original stain, and thus clearly signified that nothing could be justly adduced from the sacred writings, nor from the authority of the Fathers, which would in any way gainsay so great a prerogative of the Virgin.

And, in real truth, illustrious monuments of a venerated antiquity, of the Eastern and of the Western Church, most powerfully testify that this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, every day more and more so splendidly explained and confirmed by the highest authority, teaching, zeal, science, and wisdom of the Church, and so wonderfully propagated amongst all the nations and peoples of the Catholic world, always existed in the Church as a thing received by our ancestors, and stamped with the character of a divine revelation. For the Church of Christ, careful guardian and defender of the dogmas deposited with her, changes nothing in them, diminishes nothing, adds nothing ; but with all industry, by faithfully and wisely treating ancient things, if they are handed down from antiquity, so studies to polish and keep them bright, that these ancient dogmas of heavenly faith may receive evidence, light, distinc-



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tion, but still may retain their fulness, integrity, propriety, and may increase only in their own kind—that is, in the same dogma, the same sense, and the same belief.

The Fathers and writers of the Church, taught by the heavenly writings, had nothing more at heart, in the books written to explain the Scriptures, to vindicate the dogmas, and to instruct the faithful, than emulously to declare and exhibit in many and wonderful ways the Virgin's most high sanctity, dignity, and freedom from all stain of original sin, and her renowned victory over the most foul enemy of the human race. Wherefore, repeating the words in which, at the beginning of the world, the Almighty, announcing the remedies of his mercy prepared for regenerating mankind, crushed the audacity of the lying Serpent, and wonderfully raised up the hope of our race, saying: "I will place enmity between thee and the woman, thy seed and hers," they taught that in this divine oracle was clearly and openly pointed out the merciful Redeemer of the human race—the only-begotten Son of God, Christ Jesus, and that his Most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was designated, and at the same time that the enmity of both against the Devil was signally expressed. Wherefore, as Christ, the mediator of God and men, having assumed human nature, blotting out the handwriting of the decree which stood against us, fastened it triumphantly to the cross; so the Most Holy Virgin, united by a most close and indissoluble bond to him, exercising with Him and through Him eternal enmity against the poisoning Serpent, and triumphing most fully over the same, has crushed his head with her immaculate foot.

This illustrious and singular triumph of the Virgin, and her most exalted innocence, purity, and holiness, her freedom from all stain of sin, and ineffable abundance and greatness of all heavenly graces, virtues, and privileges, the same



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Fathers beheld in that ark of Noah, which, divine by appointment, escaped safe and sound from the common shipwreck of the whole world ; in that ladder which Jacob beheld reaching from earth to heaven, by whose steps the Angels of God ascended and descended, on whose top leaned the Lord himself; in that bush which, in the holy place, Moses beheld blaze on every side, and amidst the crackling flames neither consume nor suffer the least injury, but retain its fair verdure and bloom; also in that impregnable tower reared against the enemy, on which a thousand bucklers hang, and all the armor of the brave ; in that enclosed garden, which cannot be violated nor corrupted by any schemes of fraud ; in that brilliant city of God, whose foundations are in the holy mounts ; in that most august temple of God, which, shining with divine splendor, is filled with the glory of God ; likewise in many other things of this kind in which the Fathers have traditionally taught, that the exalted dignity of the Mother of God, and her spotless innocence, and her holiness, obnoxious to no blemish, were signally preannounced.

To describe the same totality, as it were, of divine gifts, and the original integrity of the Virgin of whom Jesus was born, the same Fathers, using the eloquence of the Prophets, celebrate the august Virgin as the spotless dove, the holy Jerusalem, the exalted throne of God, the ark of sanctification, and house which Eternal Wisdom built for itself ; and as that Queen who, abounding in delights, and leaning on her beloved, came forth entirely perfect from the mouth of the Most High, fair and most dear to God, and never stained with the least spot. But when the same Fathers and writers of the Church revolved in their hearts and minds that the Most Blessed Virgin, in the name and by the order of God himself, was proclaimed full of grace by the Angel Gabriel, when announcing her most sublime dignity of Mother of

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God, they taught that, by this singular, solemn, and till then unheard-of salutation, is shown that the Mother of God is the seat of all divine graces, and adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost—yea, the almost infinite storehouse and inexhaustible abyss of the same gifts ; so that, never subjected to malediction, alone with her Son partaker of perpetual benediction, she deserved to hear from Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost : " Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Hence it is the clear and unanimous opinion of the same, that the most glorious Virgin, for whom He who is powerful has done great things, has shone with such a brilliancy of all heavenly gifts, such fulness of grace, and such innocence, that she has been an ineffable miracle of the Almighty, yea, the crown of all miracles, and worthy Mother of God ; that she approaches as nearly to God as created nature can do, and is more exalted than all human and angelic encomiums.

And, therefore, to vindicate the original innocence and justice of the Mother of God, they not only most frequently compared her to Eve, as yet virgin, as yet innocent, as yet uncorrupted, and not yet deceived by the most deadly snares of the most treacherous serpent, but they have preferred her with a wonderful variety of thought and expression. For Eve, miserably yielding to the serpent, fell from original innocence, and became his slave ; but the Most Blessed Virgin, ever increasing her original gift, not only never lent an ear to the serpent, but by a virtue divinely received utterly broke his power.

Wherefore they have never ceased to call the Mother of God the lily amongst the thorns ; earth entirely untouched ; virgin undefiled, immaculate, ever blessed, and free from all contagion of sin, from which was formed the new Adam ; a reproachless, most sweet paradise of innocence, immortality,

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and delights, planted by God himself, and fenced from all snares of the malignant serpent ; incorruptible branch that the worm of sin has never injured ; fountain ever clear ; and marked by the virtue of the Holy Ghost, a most divine temple, or treasure of immortality, or the sole and only daughter, not of death, but of life, the germ, not of wrath, but of grace, which, by the singular providence of God, springing from a corrupt and imperfect root, has always flourished, contrary to the settled and common laws. But if these encomiums, though most splendid, were not sufficient, they proclaimed in proper and defined opinions that when sin was to be treated of, no question should be entertained concerning the Holy Virgin Mary, to whom an abundance of grace was given, to conquer sin completely. They also declared that the most glorious Virgin was the reparatrix of her parents, the vivifier of posterity, chosen from all ages, prepared for himself by the Most High, predicted by God when he said to the serpent, "I will place enmity between thee and the woman," who undoubtedly has crushed the poisonous head of the same serpent ; and therefore they affirm that the same Blessed Virgin was through grace perfectly free from stain of sin, and from all contagion of body and soul and mind, and always conversant with God ; and united with him in an eternal covenant, never was in darkness but always in light, and therefore was plainly a fit habitation for Christ, not on account of her bodily state, but on account of her original grace.

To these things are added the noble words in which, speaking of the Conception of the Virgin, they have testified that nature yielded to grace and stood trembling, not being able to proceed further ; for it was to be that the Virgin Mother of God should not be conceived by Anna before grace should bear fruit. For she ought thus to be conceived as the

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first-born, from whom should be conceived the first-born of every creature. They have testified that the flesh of the Virgin taken from Adam, did not admit the stains of Adam, and on this account that the Most Blessed Virgin was the tabernacle created by God himself, formed by the Holy Spirit truly enriched with purple which that new Beseleel made, adorned and woven with gold ; and that this same Virgin is, and deservedly is celebrated as she who stood forth God's first peculiar work, who escaped from the fiery weapons of evil, and who, fair by nature, and entirely free from stain, came forth into the world by her immaculate conception all radiant like the morn ; nor, truly, was it right that this vessel of election should be assailed by common injuries, since, differing widely from others, she had community with them only in their nature, not in their fault.

Moreover, it was right that, as the Only-begotten had a Father in heaven, whom the seraphim proclaimed thrice holy, so he should have a Mother on the earth, who should never want the splendor of holiness. And this doctrine, indeed, so filled the minds and souls of our forefathers, that a marvellous and singular form of speech prevailed with them, in which they very frequently called the Mother of God immaculate, and entirely immaculate ; innocent, and most innocent ; spotless, and spotless in every respect ; holy, and most distant from every stain of sin ; all pure, all perfect, the type almost of purity and innocence ; more beautiful than beauty, more gracious than grace, more holy than holiness, and alone holy, and most pure in soul and body, who has surpassed all perfectitude and all virginity, and has become the dwelling-place of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit, and who, God alone excepted, is superior to all, and by nature fairer, more beautiful, and more holy than the cherubim and seraphim ; she whom all the tongues of heaven and earth do

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not suffice to extol. No one is ignorant that these forms of speech have passed, as it were, spontaneously into the monuments of the most holy liturgy, and the offices of the Church, and that they occur often in them and abound amply; and that the Mother of God is invoked and named in them as a spotless dove of beauty, as a rose ever blooming and perfectly pure, and ever immaculate and ever blessed, and is celebrated as innocence which was never wounded, and a second Eve who brought forth Emmanuel.

It is no wonder, then, if the pastors of the Church and the faithful people have daily more and more gloried to profess with so much piety, fervor, and love, this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God, pointed out in the Sacred Scriptures, according to the judgment of the Fathers, handed down in so many mighty testimonies of the same, expressed and celebrated in so many illustrious monuments of a revered antiquity, and proposed and confirmed by the greatest and most solemn judgment of the Church; so that nothing would be more sweet, more dear to the same, than with most fervent affection every where to worship, venerate, invoke, and proclaim the Virgin Mother of God conceived without original stain. Wherefore from the ancient times the prelates of the Church, ecclesiastics, and even emperors and kings, have earnestly entreated of this Apostolic See that the Immaculate Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God should be defined as a dogma of Catholic faith. Which entreaties were renewed also in these our times, and especially were addressed to Gregory XVI., our predecessor of happy memory, and to ourselves, not only by Bishops, but by the secular clergy, religious orders, by the greatest princes, and by the faithful people.

Therefore, with singular joy of mind, well knowing all these things, and seriously considering them, scarcely had we,

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though unworthy, been raised by a secret counsel of Divine Providence to the exalted Chair of Peter, and undertaken the government of the whole Church, than, following the veneration, the piety, and love we had entertained for the Blessed Virgin from our tender years, we had nothing at heart more than to accomplish all these things which as yet were amongst the ardent wishes of the Church, that the honor of the Most Blessed Virgin should be increased, and her prerogatives should shine with a full light. But wishing to bring this to full maturity, we appointed a special congregation of our venerable brothers, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, illustrious by their piety, their wisdom, and their knowledge of the sacred sciences, and we also selected ecclesiastics, both secular and regular, well trained in theological discipline, that they should most carefully weigh all those things which relate to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and report to us their opinion. And, although by the entreaties lately received by us for defining the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, the opinions of most of the Bishops of the Church were evinced; however, we issued Encylical Letters, dated at Gaeta, the 2d day of February, in the year 1849, to all our venerable brethren the Bishops of all the Catholic world, in order that, having offered prayers to God, they might signify to us, in writing, what was the piety and devotion of their flocks towards the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, and especially what the Bishops themselves thought about promulgating the definition, or what they desired in order that we might pronounce our supreme judgment as solemnly as possible.

Certainly we were filled with no slight consolation when the replies of our venerable brethren came to us. For, with an incredible joyfulness, gladness, and zeal, they not only confirmed their own singular piety, and that of their

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clergy and faithful people, towards the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin, but they even entreated of us, with a common voice, that the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin should be defined by our supreme judgment and authority. Nor, indeed, were we filled with less joy when our venerable brothers, the Cardinals of the Special Congregation aforesaid, and the consulting theologians chosen by us, after a diligent examination, demanded from us with equal alacrity and zeal this definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God.

Afterwards walking in the illustrious footsteps of our predecessors, and desiring to proceed duly and properly, we proclaimed and held a Consistory, in which we addressed our brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and with the greatest consolation of mind we heard them entreat of us that we should promulgate the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God.

Therefore, having full trust in the Lord that the opportune time had come for defining the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, which the Divine words, venerable tradition, the perpetual opinion of the Church, the singular agreement of Catholic prelates and faithful, and the signal acts and constitutions of our predecessors, wonderfully illustrate and proclaim; having most diligently weighed all things, and poured forth to God assiduous and fervent prayers, we resolved that we should no longer delay to sanction and define, by our supreme decision, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and thus to satisfy the most pious desires of the Catholic world and our own piety towards the Most Holy Virgin, and, at the same time, to honor more and more the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, since whatever honor and praise is given to the Mother redounds to the Son.



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Wherefore, after we had unceasingly, in humility and fasting, offered our own prayers and the public prayers of the Church to God the Father, through his Son, that He would deign to direct and confirm our mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, and implored the aid of the whole court of heaven, and invoked the Paraclete with sighs, and He thus inspiring, to the honor of the holy and undivided Trinity, to the glory and ornament of the Virgin Mother of God, to the exaltation of the Catholic Faith and the increase of the Catholic religion, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, we declare, pronounce and define, that the doctrine which holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin, has been revealed by God, and therefore should firmly and constantly be believed by all the faithful. Wherefore, if any shall dare —which God forbid—to think otherwise than as it has been defined by us, they should know and understand that they are condemned by their own judgment, that they have suffered shipwreck as to the faith, and have revolted from the unity of the Church ; and besides, by their own act they subject themselves to the penalties justly established, if what they think they should dare to signify by word, writing, or any other outward means.

Our mouth is filled with joy, and our tongue with exultation, and we return, and shall ever return, the most humble and the greatest thanks to Jesus Christ our Lord, because through his singular beneficence He has granted to us, though unworthy, to offer and decree this honor, glory, and praise to His Most Holy Mother ; but we rest in the most certain hope and confidence that this Most Blessed Virgin, who, all fair

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and immaculate, has bruised the poisonous head of the most cruel Serpent, and brought salvation to the world, who is the praise of the Prophets and the Apostles, the honor of the Martyrs, and the crown and joy of all the Saints—who is the safest refuge and most faithful helper of all who are in danger, and the most powerful mediatrix and conciliatrix of the whole world, with the only-begotten Son, and the most illustrious glory and ornament, and as a most firm guardian of the Holy Church, has destroyed all heresies, and snatched from the greatest calamities of all kinds the faithful peoples and nations, and delivered us from so many threatening dangers, will effect by her most powerful patronage that, all difficulties being removed, and all errors dissipated, our Holy Mother the Catholic Church may flourish daily more and more throughout all nations and countries, and may reign from sea to sea and from the river to the uttermost bounds of the earth, and may enjoy all peace, tranquillity, and liberty; that the sinner may obtain pardon, the sick healing, the weak strength of heart, the afflicted consolation, and that all who are in error, their spiritual blindness being dissipated, may return to the path of truth and justice, and that there may be one flock and one shepherd.

Let all the children of the Catholic Church most dear to us hear our words, and, with a more ardent zeal of piety, religion, and love, proceed to worship, invoke, and pray to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, conceived without original sin, and let them fly with entire confidence to this most sweet Mother of Mercy and Grace in all dangers, difficulties, necessities, doubts, and fears. For nothing is to be feared, and nothing is to be despaired of under her guidance, under her auspices, under her favor, under her protection, who, bearing towards us a maternal affection, and taking up the business of our salvation, is solicitous for the



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whole human race, and, appointed by God the Queen of Heaven and Earth, and exalted above all the choirs of Angels, and orders of Saints, standing at the right hand of the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, intercedes most powerfully, and obtains what she asks, and cannot be frustrated.

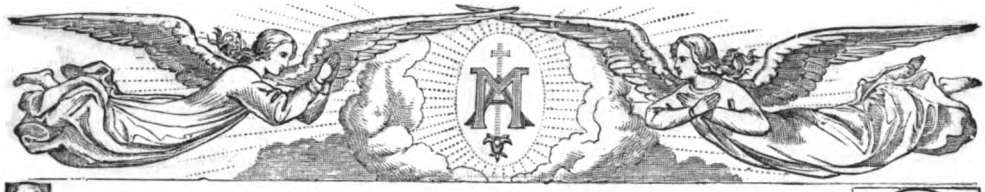
Finally, in order that this our definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary may be brought to the knowledge of the Universal Church, we will these Letters Apostolic to stand for a perpetual remembrance thereof, commanding that to transcripts or printed copies, subscribed by the hand of some notary public, and authenticated by the seal of a person of ecclesiastical rank, appointed for the purpose, the same credit shall be given which would be given to these presents if they were exhibited or shown.

Let no man infringe with this our declaration, pronunciation, and definition, or oppose and contradict it with presumptuous rashness. If any should presume to assail it, let him know that he will incur the indignation of the Omnipotent God and of His Blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the Incarnation of our Lord, 1854, the sixth of the Ides of December, in the ninth year of our Pontificate.

Pius P. IX.

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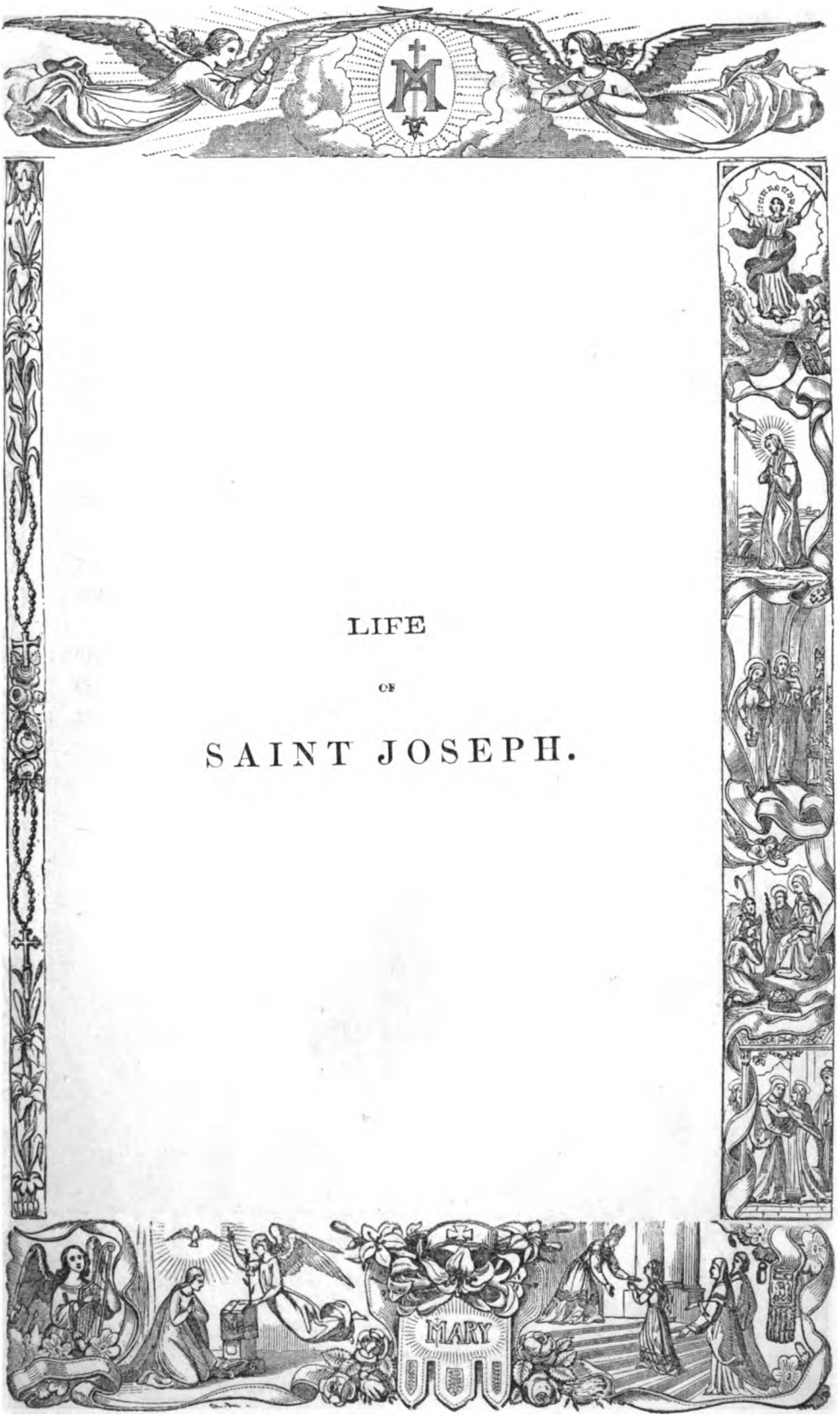
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LIFE

OF

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Miller

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THE LIFE

OF

SAINT JOSEPH,

MOST WORTHY SPOUSE OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,

AND

FOSTERFATHER OF JESUS.

BY

FATHER JOSEPH IGNATIUS VALLEJO,

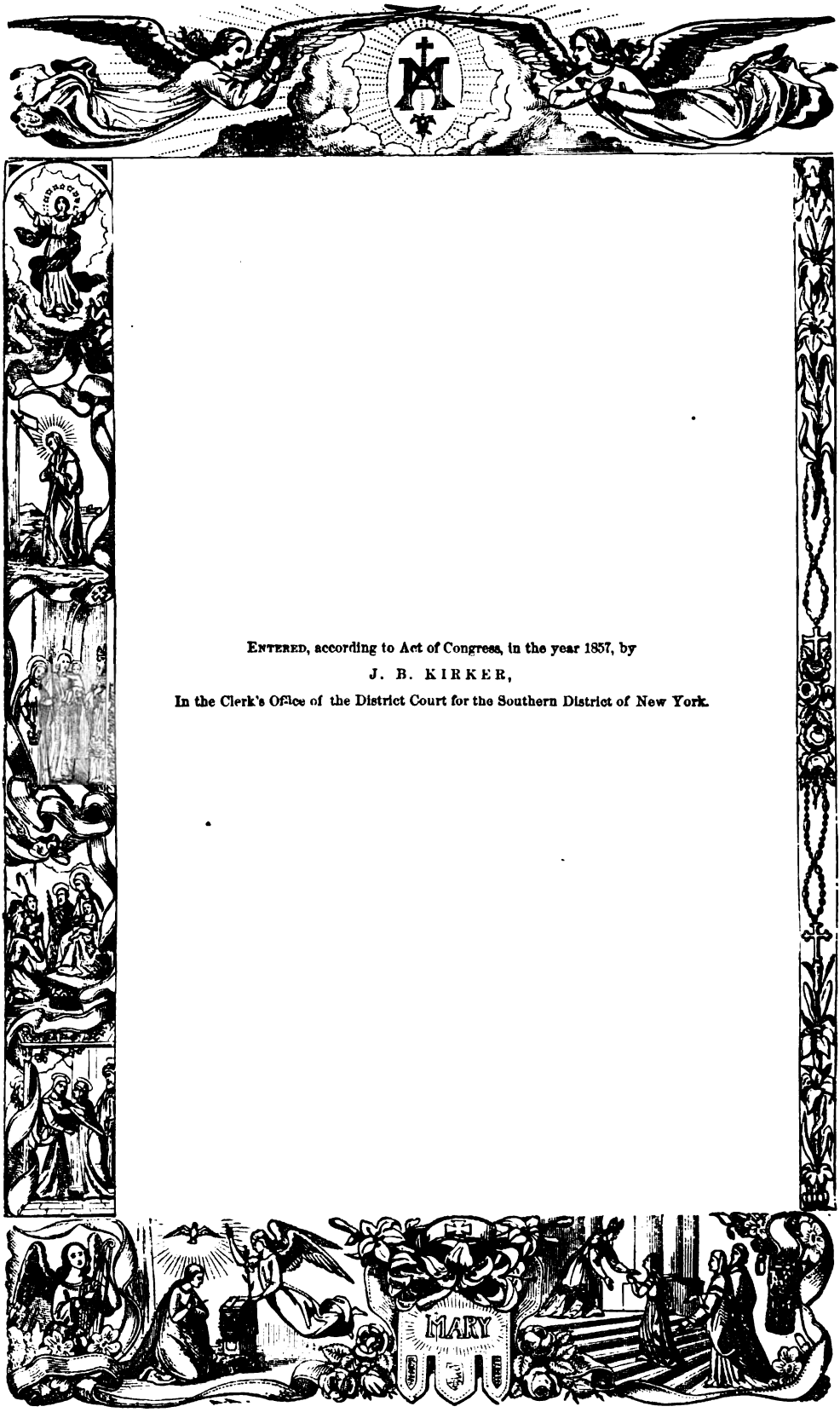
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.



NEW YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN AND BROTHER,
(JAS. B. KIRKER.)
599 BROADWAY.
1861.

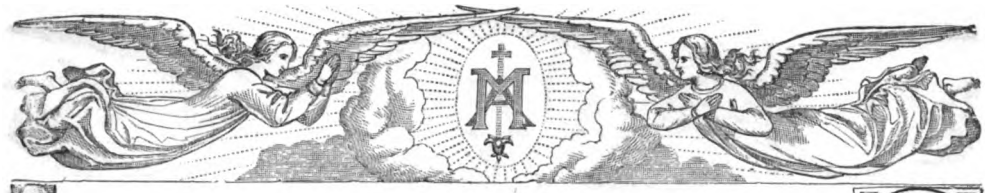


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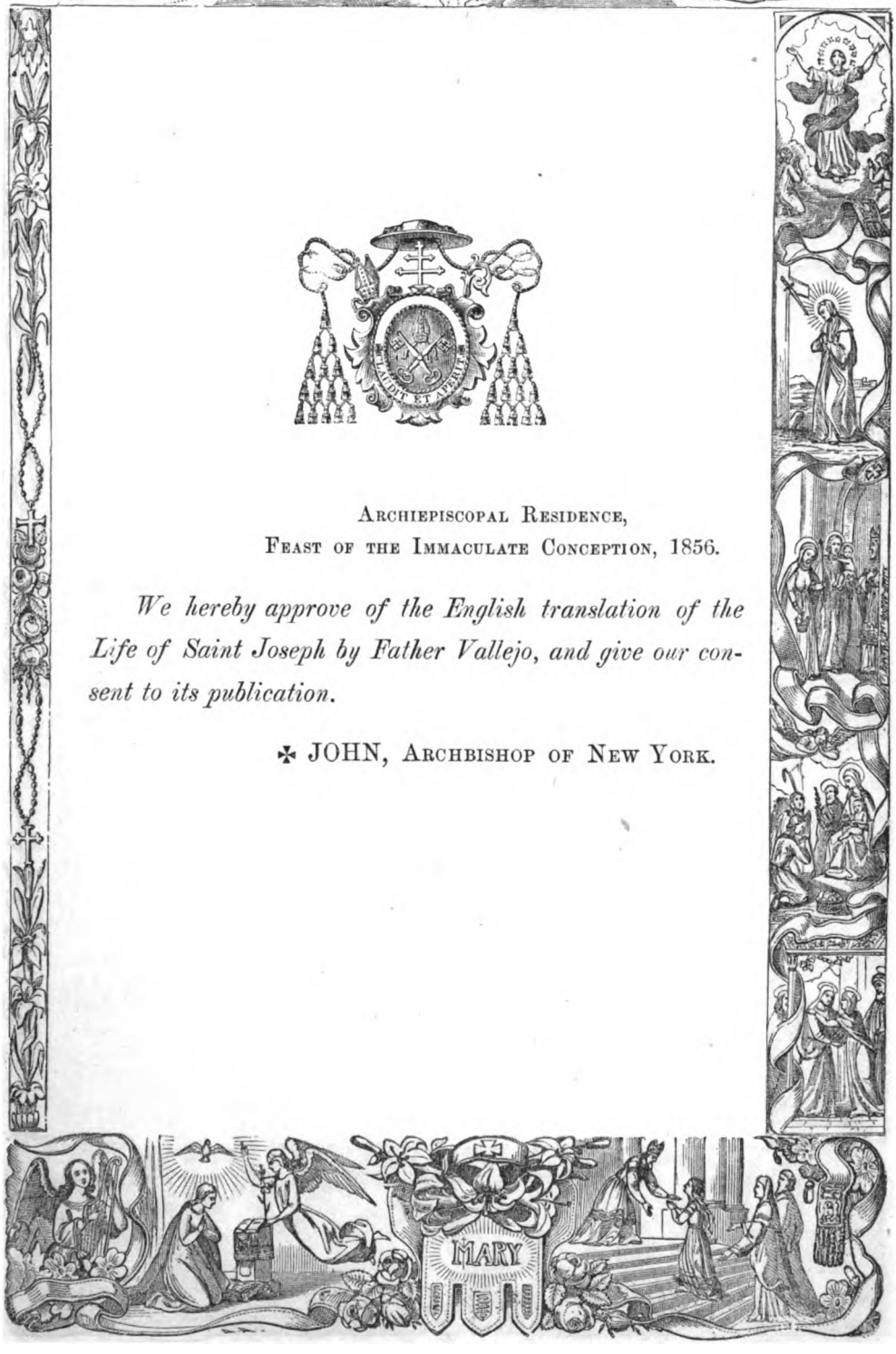
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Archiepiscopal Residence,
Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1856.

We hereby approve of the English translation of the Life of Saint Joseph by Father Vallejo, and give our consent to its publication.

✠ JOHN, Archbishop of New York.



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TO

MONSIGNORE CAETANO BEDINI,

ARCHBISHOP OF THEBES,

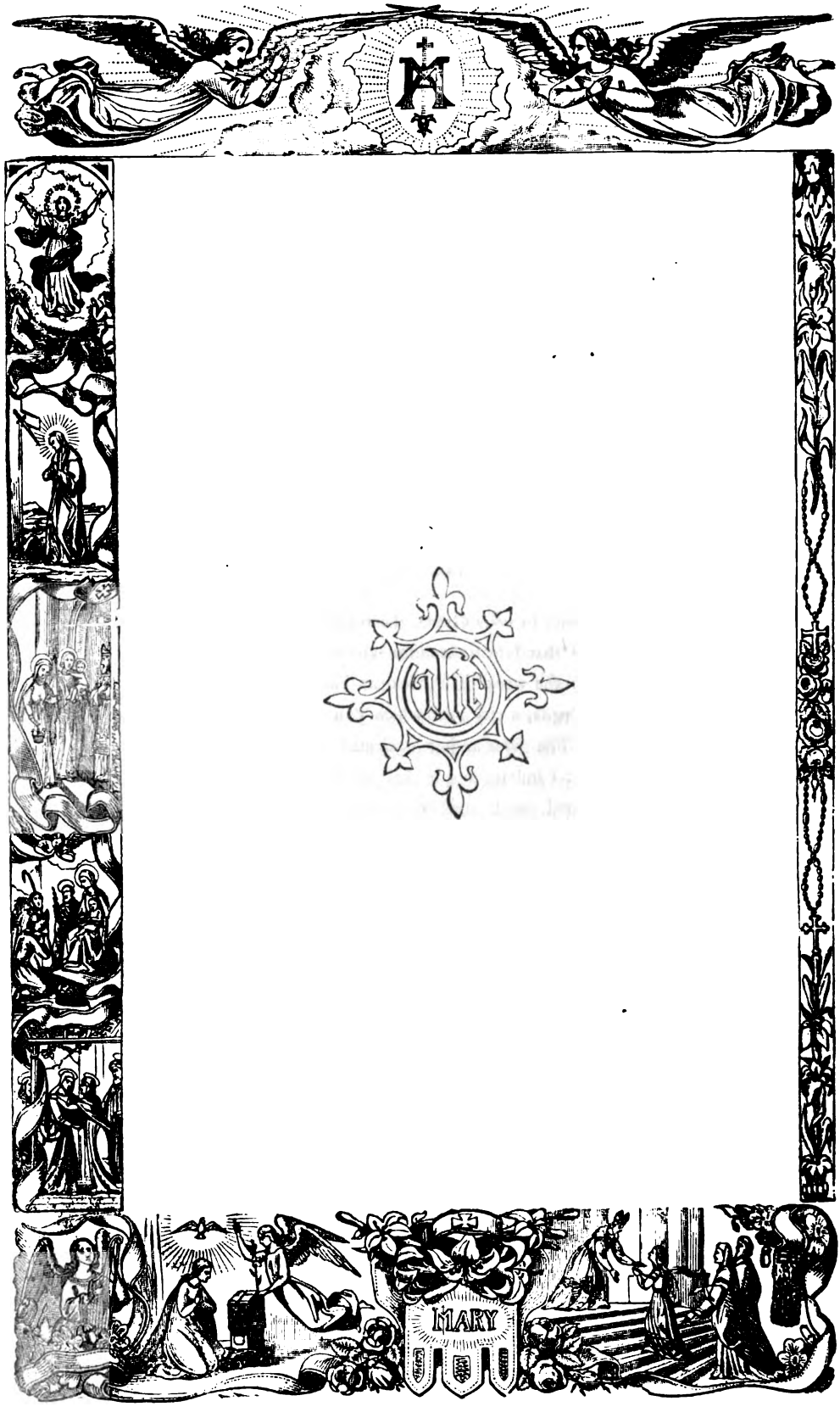
SECRETARY OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION DE PROPAGANDA FIDE.

I preſume to dedicate to your Grace, the tranſlation of a Life of St. Joſeph, the patron of that North America which you viſited as Nuncio to His Holineſs, itſelf the work of a Mexican Father of the Society of Jeſus, who died in Bologna, a city over which you preſided with so mild and paternal a rule. The pious author dedicated his labor to Our Lady de la O in Guatemala; I imitate him in dedicating it to you, with the requeſt that your honored hands may lay it at the feet of Our Lady of Rimini, whoſe miraculous favors mark the period of your government, and whoſe devotion you have here so zealouſly diffuſed.

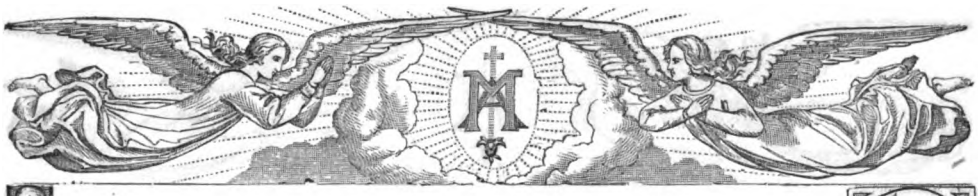
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Feast of the Assumption of our Lady, 1856.

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PREFACE.

THE publishers have thought that they could not better continue the most pious and learned Life of our Blessed Lady, with which the esteemed prelate Gentilucci has enriched the ascetical literature of Europe in the nineteenth century, than by presenting to American readers the Life of Saint Joseph, the most worthy spouse of the Immaculate Queen of heaven, a work composed in the last century in Spanish by Joseph Ignatius Vallejo, an eminent father of the Society of Jesus, which, as he was a native of Mexico, is an American tribute to the spouse of Our Lady, that glorious patron pointed out by Heaven as the tutelar saint of North America.

Born at Cañadas, in Mexico, on the 9th of September, 1718, Vallejo entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty-three, and was actively employed as professor of theology and philosophy in various colleges, chiefly at Guatemala, where he was President of the College of St. Francis Borgia, and Director of the Sodality in that city, when the arbitrary act of the Spanish monarch drove the Jesuits from



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his dominions, and deprived Spain and her colonies of so many holy men, learned teachers, and zealous missionaries of the word of God, leaving his domains open to the inroads of that infidel philosophy which has since dismembered his empire, tyrannized over the Church, and made civil war an apparently fatal attendant on the Spanish race.

Italy became the refuge of the banished Father Vallejo, as it did of his celebrated countrymen and fellow religious, a Clavigero, an Abad, and an Hervas. There he published several works, among the principal of which are a Life of our Blessed Lady, and the present volume. Its Christian erudition, good taste and critical acumen, met the applause not only of his own countrymen, and of Spanish critics generally, but won the admiration, as it had obtained the approbation, of the Italian prelates. The pious author died at Bologna on the 30th of May, 1785, loaded with the eulogies of all good men.



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BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

TRIBE AND FAMILY OF ST. JOSEPH—HIS SANCTIFICATION BEFORE HIS BIRTH—PREROGATIVES THAT MAKE IT PROBABLE—OTHER SINGULAR PREROGATIVES RESULTING FROM HIS RESEMBLANCE TO THE MOTHER OF GOD.

THE Divine Wisdom destined St. Joseph to occupy the most honorable post that heaven has witnessed among angels and men. Of so great a saint we cannot then but believe greatness, nor relate other prerogatives than a dignity made up of such superior excellence, that we behold fulfilled in his person that splendid eulogy with which Pliny applauded the Emperor Trajan: "Let naught be said of our prince that can be probably said of any other." * This is required by the high and holy ministry of

* Ne quid de Principe nostro dicant, ut illud idem de alio dici potuisse videatur. (PLINIUS JUNIOR, *in Panegyrico Traj.*)



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that happy man, in whom was prepared a spouse for the Virgin Mary, and a foster father for Jesus, for Him who was to be the treasure of the knowledge and wisdom of the Father of lights.* When David drew the outline of that temple which still shows the inconstancy of earthly things, by the sad memorials of its ashes and its ruins, he uttered this sentence worthy of a religious and magnanimous heart: "The work is great, for a house is prepared, not for man, but for God." † If such was the conception of David, what must have been the designs of that Lord who holds all greatness in his hand, when he prepared a Father for God made man, and a spouse worthy, by a similarity of virtues and privileges, of the Queen of the universe? It is not necessary to seek far-fetched comparisons to describe his qualities: the very greatness of that Son who came down from heaven in the fulness of time, to redeem the human race by his blood, his very dignity portrays them to us in an adorable spectacle of Divine Providence. To think, then, of the spouse of the Mother of God, aught that is not great, would be to reflect on the conduct of that Lord who has no equal in his counsels; since even among men, as the Emperor Theodosius says in his laws: "It is a kind of sacrilege to doubt whether he is worthy, whom the emperor has chosen." ‡

In St. Joseph was raised up a vicar and substitute to the Eternal Father, and in his espousals, a companion to the Holy Ghost, and a consort like her § who had none to imitate,

---

* "Christ Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Coloss. ii. 3.)

† I. Paralip. xxix. 1.

‡ Sacrilegii enim instar est, dubitare, an is dignus sit, quem elegerit imperator. (*Lege.* Disputare. 3 C. *de Crimine sacrilegii.*)

§ Let us make him a help like unto himself. (Gen. ii. 18.)

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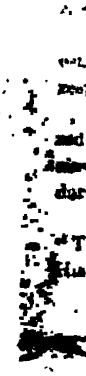


CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

And when he drew near, he beheld the City he wept over it LUKE XIX 41

James S. Gilbert, New York

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nor has found one to follow her in the splendor of her perfections.* An ancient statesman,† treating of the time when a choice was to be made of a successor to Alexander the Great, said that he left many heirs to the empire, but none of his heart and valor. "If you seek for the sceptre and throne, one who would replace Alexander, you will not find it; but if you ask me, whom I deem most worthy of the crown, I will answer, that the one of whom I have spoken, is the only one that can succeed him. In him concur the qualities and conditions of the best, as Alexander stated in his will just before expiring: "Elect for my successor him who is the best."

St. Joseph being then chosen as a substitute for the Eternal Father in the love and care of his only-begotten Son, he could not be less than excellent in the virtues and privileges with which he was enriched by that Lord, so liberal in his favors that he not only restores lost grace,‡ but grants more than is hoped for. Hence with greater justice than to the ancient emperors may we apply Pliny's encomium, great indeed for a Trajan, but weak for a Joseph, that master and head of the Holy Family, most worthy spouse of Mary and excellent foster father of Jesus.§ "More illustrious is thy praise, for

* Nec primam similem visa est, nec habere sequentem. (SAINT BERNARD, *Serm. de Assumptione.*)

† Si Alexandro similem quæritis, nunquam reperietis; si proximum, hic solus est. (QUINTUS CURTIUS, Lib. X. c. xx.) Quaerentibus his, cui relinqueret regnum, respondit; ei qui esset optimus. (QUINTUS CURTIUS, Lib. c. vii.)

‡ Vide quam bonus Deus et facilis indulgere peccatis, non solum ablata restituit sed etiam insperata concedit."—"See how good God is, and how ready to forgive sins; not only has he restored what was taken away, but granted what we had not dared to hope." (SAINT AMBROSE, *Hom. Lib. I. in Lucam. cap.* 1. *in fine.*)

§ "Ita innixus est huic beato Joseph, ut ipse fuerit infantulo pater optimus."—"The Lord so relied on Blessed Joseph, as to make him the excellent father for His Infant Son." (RUPERT, *De gloria Filii hominis.*) "Hæc nominatio magnifica

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thou art not only the best, but the greatest: thou hast attained a name which cannot pass to others: though others should hereafter usurp it, it will ever be recognized as thine. Never can this appellation of 'the best' occur to the mind without remembering thee. As often as our posterity are compelled to style any one 'the best,' so often shall they remember thee who hast deserved the title. How great a joy must thou experience, O Nerva, to see him whom thou didst choose as the best, not only the best, but styled so by all." *

Of Joseph, more worthy of such a eulogy than all the great men of earth, I now undertake to write the life and glorious actions, under the protection and shadow of the Son and Mother of light from whom my feeble pen expects its aid.

Joseph was of the famous tribe of Juda, and of the blood of David, through the branch of Solomon, which was the royal one, and as a descendant of that great monarch, great prophet and great Saint of Israel, he counted among his illustrious progenitors, ten Judges and leaders of the people of God, thirteen Patriarchs, and twenty-two august Sovereigns.† He was the first-born of Jacob ‡ according to the law

---

(scilicet patris Dei Hominis) propria est beati Joseph."—"This splendid appointment of Father to the Man God, is peculiar to St. Joseph." (RUPERT, *in Evang. cap.* 6.)

* Quo præclarior laus tua quem non minus constat optimum esse, quam maximum . . . Assecutus es nomen, quod ad alios transire non possit . . . Quod licet omnes postea usurpent, semper cognoscetur ut tuum . . . Hæc optimi appellatio nunquam sine te memoriæ occurret. Quoties posteri nostri optimum aliquem vocare cogentur, toties recordabuntur, quis meruerit vocari. Quanto nunc, Dive Nerva, gaudio frueris, cum vides et esse optimum, et dici, quem tanquam optimum elegisti. (PLINIUS, *in Panegyrico.*)

† Esse eri di gran prosapia, e scorriendo per le istorie de Israelo e di Giude poteva appuntare de suoi antenati dieci Giudici e Condottieri del Popolo, tredici Patriarchi e ventidue Re di corona. (P. CESARE CALINO, *Panegirico de San Guiseppe.*)

‡ And Mathan begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary. (Matt. i. 15, 16.)

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of nature, and was styled the legal son of Heli * in consequence of a law promulgated in Israel, and to be found in Deuteronomy. Jacob and Heli were half-brothers, sons of Hesta, wife, first of Mathan, Jacob's father, and on his death or divorce, wife of Mathat, Heli's father, of the blood of David through Nathan,† Solomon's brother, and like him son of Bethsabee. Heli died without an heir, and for this reason his brother Jacob espoused his widow, to fulfil the law of Deuteronomy,‡ which ordained, that if one brother died without issue of his marriage, the widow should marry the next brother, and that the first-born of this union should be considered the son and heir representing the person and rights of the deceased, in order that his memory might be preserved in Israel. By this law, Joseph, first-born of Jacob and Hesta, is called also son of Heli, and as son of such parents, became a scion of the house of David, heir of that monarch's blood and rights.

The learned Maldonado,§ approving this interpretation

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* Joseph who was of Heli.

† The genealogy of David divides into two branches, one of which Solomon is the head, and which is continued in his posterity; this was styled the house and family of David, in which resided the right to the crown in Israel, and the sceptre of Juda; which, according to the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob, was not to leave it till the coming of the promised Messias was at hand. Of the second branch Nathan was the head. This branch, which did not share in the rights of inheritance, formed in Juda a house perfectly distinct from that called the house and family of David.

Saint Augustine thought that Nathan, ancestor of Heli, was the prophet Nathan, who rebuked David, and was adopted by him as a son; but with this Father disagree all commentators on 2 Kings v. 14, where Nathan is spoken of as the son of David by nature, and consequently distinct from the prophet Nathan.

‡ "When brethren dwell together, and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another; but his brother shall take her, and raise up seed for his brother; and the first son he shall have of her he shall call by his name." (Deut. xxv. 5.)

§ Hæc interpretatio [scilicet a qua acceptum est, Josephum filium fuisse Jacobi

of the gospel which gives the genealogy of Saint Joseph, says "that Julius Africanus * affirms that he heard the kindred of Christ aver that Jacob was Joseph's father according to the order of nature, and that Heli was merely his legal father: that is to say, that Saint Matthew, in the first chapter of his gospel, describes the progenitors of the spouse of the Blessed Virgin and Mother of Jesus Christ in the natural order, and Saint Luke those of Heli, whose son, St. Joseph, was regarded according to the law which prevailed among the Jews. This interpretation of the two gospels is approved by the almost universal consent of all antiquity: it is approved by Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Saint Ambrose, Eucherius, Saint John Damascenus, Saint Bede, and Theophylact; hence we wonder that it did not please Saint Augustine. And he too, towards the close of his life, more advanced in wisdom, conformed to the common explanation."

To meet the provisions of the law of Deuteronomy, it was not necessary that the brothers should be sons of the same father or same mother, as some examples in Scripture show: it was sufficient that there was any degree of relationship between them, such as would give them a right to each other's property, should either die without heirs. It was not

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secundum naturam et Heli secundum legem], ab ipsis, ut ait Africanus, Christi cognatis accepta . . . summo ab omni antiquitate consensu probata est, a Justino, (*Ad Orthodoxos* 66), ab Eusebio (*Libro.* 1. *Hist. Eccles.* c. 7), ab &c. . . . Quo magis mirum est uni non fuisse probatum Augustino. Quamvis eam quoque sub finem vitæ doctior probaverit. (MALDONADO, *in Cap.* 1. *Matth. v.* 16.)

"Quod si Epiphanio, et apostolo Matthæo credimus, Joseph hic patrem habuit Jacob, ut pote naturalem, et Heli legalem, pluribus ut explicat Damascenus." (*Lib. IV. de fide.*)—"But if we believe Epiphanius and the Apostle St. Matthew, Joseph had Jacob as his natural, Heli as his legal father, as St. John Damascenus shows at length." (VEN. PETER CANISIUS, Lib. II. c. xiii.)

* Eusebius, in his history of the Church, has preserved some fragments of Julius Africanus, who flourished at the beginning of the third century.

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necessary that those comprised in the law should inhabit the same house or city, nor that the son should take the name of the deceased whom he represented, and whose legal son he was, as we see in the example of Ruth, whose son, called Obed, did not take the name of Celion, who had been her first husband, and was consequently legal father of the son of Booz, with whom, after Celion's death, she contracted a second marriage. The law indeed prescribes that the first-born of the second nuptials should bear the name of his legal father, that is of the deceased, first husband of his mother; but this provision, as Saint Augustine notes, only means that the first-born of the second marriage should be considered the son of the first, with the design of preserving his memory." Tillemont adds,* that this is the common opinion of the Fathers. Sandinus† says that Saint Jerome and other ancients were of this opinion.

Saint Augustine, Saint Ambrose, and others cited by Maldonado, believed that the intention of Saint Matthew and

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*. L'opinion la plus commune parmi les Pères est qu'il etoit né de Jacob, descendu de David par Salomon, et tous les autres rois de Juda, et fils selon la loi, d' Heli, descendu de Nathan, fils de David et Bethsabée. (TILLEMONT, *Memoires pour servir a l' histoire ecclesiastique des six premiers siecles.* I. 74.)

† Jacobus et Heli fratres erant uterini. Heli sine liberis mortuo, Jacobus viduam ejus sibi conjunxit juxta leges præceptorum Deuteronomii, eaque genuit Josephum, secundum naturam filium suum, ut Matthæus; secundum legem filium Heli, ut Lucas narrat. Ita Julius Africanus, qui ineunte sæculo tertio floruit, in Epistola ad Aristidem, (*apud Eusebium. Lib. I. cap. VII.*) Africano ut scribit Baronius in Apparatu ad Annales (§ 34) Hieronymus ac cæteri antiquorum Patrum adstipulati sunt.—"Jacob and Heli were uterine brothers. Heli dying without issue, Jacob, according to the laws of Deuteronomy, married his widow, and by her had Joseph, his son by nature, as Matthew narrates; or son of Heli according to the law, as Luke gives it. So Julius Africanus, who flourished in the early part of the third century, states in an epistle to Aristides. (*Eusebius I cap. VII.*) According to Baronius (*App. ad Annales* § 34), Jerome and others of the ancient Fathers confirm Africanus." (SANDINUS, De Sanct. Josepho. c. I.)

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Saint Luke in assigning different fathers to Saint Joseph, was to show that Christ had two genealogies ; one royal, as son of David, through the line of Solomon, which is that given by Saint Matthew in the first chapter of his gospel, and the other priestly, which is that described by Saint Luke in the third chapter of his gospel. This solution does not, however, please Maldonado, who shows that other distinguished writers of his time rejected it, because there is nothing to show that Jesus was connected by blood with the priestly tribe. Maldonado,* and the other learned men who follow his opinion, rely on two reasons ; the first is, that neither Nathan, nor any other of the ancestors of Heli, was a priest ; and the second is, that Saint Paul, in the whole of the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, evidently denies that Jesus Christ had any connection with the race of Aaron.

Some, too, have thought that Heli and Joachim were names of one and the same person, and that Saint Joseph was son of Heli by affinity, that is, by marrying his daughter

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* "Alii respondent, ideo diverse a diversis Evangelistis recenseri, quod Matthæus regale Christi genus, Lucas sacerdotale narret. Sic existimat Augustinus. Lib. 83, q. q. 61 . . . Multique hodie (forsitan qui Nathan sacerdotem crediderunt) quorum mihi sententia ideo non probatur, quia non constat, Christum ex tribu Levi sacerdotalis aliquid generis habuisse. Quin viri nonnulli insigniter docti præcise negaverunt, quod D. Paulus toto septimo capite Epistolæ ad Hebræos negare videatur . . . Manifestum est enim, at Apostolus, quod ex Juda ortus sit Dominus noster, in qua tribu nihil de sacerdotibus Moyses locutus est."—"Some answer that it is thus differently given by the different Evangelists, because Matthew gives Christ's royal, Luke His priestly descent. So St. Augustine thinks (Lib. 83. q. q. 61., and many in our days (doubtless supposing Nathan a priest), whose opinion I hold not proved, because it is not evident that Christ was at all descended from the priestly tribe of Levi. Nay, some extremely learned men deny it expressly because St. Paul in the whole of the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, seems to deny it; 'For it is evident says the Apostle, that our Lord sprang out of Juda, in which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.'" (Heb. vii. 14. MALDONADO, *in Matt.* i. 16.)

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the Virgin Mary, whose blood and person he represented. There is nothing in Sacred Scripture to show that Heli and Joachim were the same person; for although it shows that several had two names, as Gedeon, called also Jerobaal, Isaias, called also Jesse, this is proved by the inspired books, and there is no proof in them that Heli and Joachim are two names for the father of the Virgin Mary. What is most probable is, that Heli, Joachim, and Jacob were brothers;* Heli only on the mother's side, Joachim and Jacob on both father and mother's side: their father was Mathan, a descendant of David, through the branch in which the right to the hereditary throne of Juda did not reside. Joachim, as Father Mariana,† a celebrated commentator, teaches, was the first-born. The authors of this opinion affirm, consequently, that the Blessed Virgin, daughter and heiress of Saint Joachim, the first-born of Mathan, transmitted to Jesus not only the blood of David, but also a right to the sceptre and diadem of Judea. Father Tirinus ‡ does not agree with the opinion of

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* "Valde verisimile est, quod tempore Christi notissimum erat, Mathan fuisse communem avum Josephi et Beatissimæ Virginis; Jacob vero patrem Josephi et Joachim, patrem B. Virginis fuisse fratres germanos, ut vult Francis Lucas."—"It is very probable that in the time of Christ it was well known that Mathan was the grandfather of Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, that Jacob, Joseph's father, and Joachim the father of the Blessed Virgin, were brothers, according to Francis Lucas. (CORNELIUS A LAPIDE, *in Luke* iii. 27.)

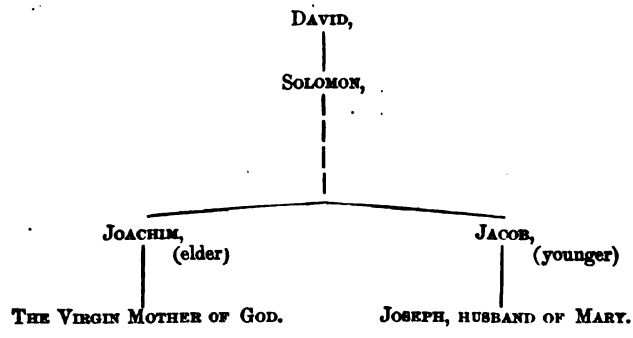
† "Putabam Joachim patrem Virginis et Jacob patrem Josephi fuisse fratres: Joachim natu majorem et Jacobum natu minorem; unde ad Joachimum potius tanquam primogenitum attinebat jus regni"—"I think that Joachim, the Blessed Virgin's father, and Jacob, Joseph's father, were brothers, Joachim being the elder, so that to him as first-born, devolved the right to the kingdom." (MARIANA, *in Matt.* i.)

‡ "Id autem (scilicet jus regni), ex Mariæ genealogia non obveniebat Christo; cum fœminis nullum sit jus ad regnum, quando proles masculæ supersunt . . . Unde Jesus, ut erat proprius ac legitimus, etsi non naturalis filius Josephi, habebat omnia jura filii respectu illius, ac proinde etiam jus regni a morte Josephi."—

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Mariana, because, in the Jewish monarchy, women did not reign, or if capable of reigning, were nevertheless deprived of the use of that hereditary right, when any male of the royal family survived ; and so we must concede, that the right of Jesus to the throne of David is founded on the genealogy of Saint Joseph, putative father of the Man-God, and whose only heir both as to property and rights he was, by reason of the marriage publicly solemnized with the Blessed Virgin.

According to this genealogy, Saint Joseph was related to his most pure spouse in the second degree of consanguinity, and to Jesus in the third, as we clearly see by the genealogical tree which with Mariana, Francis Lucas, Cornelius a Lapide, eminent commentators, and other authors, Virgil Sedelmeyer gives in his Theologia Mariana.



We shall remark, in connection with this genealogical plan, that the infinite Wisdom, which watched over the fulfil-

"The right to the throne did not devolve on Christ through Mary's genealogy as women had no right to the crown, while males survived . . . Hence Jesus, as he was properly and lawfully (though not naturally), son of Joseph, had all rights of a son towards him, and accordingly the right to the throne on Joseph's death.' (Tirinus, *in Matt.* i.)

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ment of its oracles, so disposed events, that precisely in the happy period when the Messias was to be born, the race of David through Solomon should remain, though eclipsed and hidden from the eyes of the world, and should terminate on the one side in a virgin named Mary, and on the other in a Joseph, who, as well by the election of heaven, as by the fiat of the law, was to be the spouse of this only daughter of Saint Joachim, and heiress of the patrimonial rights of his house. This genealogy also shows us that the Blessed Virgin gave her only son and God's only Son, the blood of the tribe of Juda and of the royal family of David, and that Joseph her spouse, as reputed father of Jesus, transmitted to his putative son his rights to the sceptre and throne of Judea.

Writers have not been wanting, who maintained that Mathan was the father, not of Saint Joachim, but of Jacob and Saint Anne; that is, of Joseph's father and the Blessed Virgin's mother. This opinion seems based on a Greek menology, in which we read that Saint Anne was the daughter of Mathan: but the argument loses all force, when we reflect that the Mathan, said in certain apocryphal memoirs and common traditions to have been the father of Saint Anne, was of the priestly tribe and order, and consequently quite different from Mathan, father of Jacob, mentioned in the beginning of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew.

We must observe lastly, for the better understanding of sacred history, that in all rigor and propriety, Judea and Jews meant the province and the persons comprised by the tribes of Benjamin and Juda, together with the greater part of the tribe of Levi. These possessed the city of Jerusalem, which was, according to Euthymius, the capital of the tribe of Benjamin, and according to others,* of the tribe of Juda, that is,

* Jerusalem properly belonged to no tribe. By some it was assigned to the

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the seat of empire, and by its sanctuary the centre of the public exercises of the religion of the Israelites. This part took the name of kingdom of Judea or Juda, after the revolt of the ten tribes: because the tribe of Juda, at all times famous and renowned, was the glory, strength, and hope, so to say, of the mass of the nation, which looked to it for the Messias, who was to come and exchange the sceptre and crown, his by hereditary right, for a spiritual empire and kingdom, to last for ever, and extend over the whole world. The other kingdom, made up of the ten revolted tribes, took the name of Israel, which had previously been common to the whole body of the monarchy of the Hebrews, and chose as its capital the city of Samaria, the irreconcilable enemy of Judea. When the Jews returned from their captivity at Babylon, some say that the name of Israel recovered its ancient meaning and was applied to the whole people of God.

Some theologians and critics deny this great Saint the privilege of having been born sanctified, because this favor is not mentioned in the writings and traditions of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church; but others, of less stern criticism, do not require as necessary such clear proofs, in order to concede as probable, this grace, with which the Almighty has deigned to honor other saints who did not enjoy all the advantageous prerogatives of the father of Jesus and most worthy spouse of Mary,—a saint placed, by the fact of his ministry, in that superior order which theologians term hypostatic.* This privilege was bestowed on the Baptist, who was born as the

tribe of Benjamin, by others to that of Juda. (CALMET, *Dictionary of the Bible*, verbo *Jerusalem.*)

* "In hoc ordine (*scilicet* hypostatico) intelligo, constitutum esse ministerium Sancti Josephi."—"In this degree I place the ministry of Saint Joseph." (SUAREZ, Tom. II. Part III. disp. VIII. § 2.)

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glorious precursor of the Man-God. And whoever will consider the profound dignity of him who was born the chosen spouse of the Virgin Mary and putative father of Jesus, we cannot but deem him entitled in some measure, above other saints, to this grace which adds a new degree of splendor to his sanctity. Saint Augustine has not left his opinion on this point; but he seems to indicate it in general words, where he says, that God has done whatever based on solid grounds seems to us the best.* Jurists do not very readily concede extraordinary privileges, and yet they affirm, in their maxims, that conjectures and presumptions which tend to religion and piety, are very powerful, and worthy of preference.† The learned and pious Father Stephen Binet, in an eloquent work entitled "Mirror of the Divine favors bestowed on Saint Joseph," although he says that those who assert that this saint was sanctified in his mother's womb, speak from excess of devotion, confesses withal that the reasons which they allege are not devoid of weight.‡ Some count Saint Thomas§ and Suarez‖ among the authors who deny this

* Quidquid tibi vera ratione melius occurrerit, id scias, fecisse Deum." (St. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio, Lib. III. cap. V.*)

† Summam esse rationem, quæ pro religione facit. (*Lege* Sunt personæ 43 § *de religiosis et sumptibus funerum.*)

‡ "Others, going further, have said that St. Joseph was sanctified in his mother's womb, like Saint John the Baptist, and came holy into the world. This, however, is said from excess of devotion, though the reasons alleged are not without weight."

§ "Neque credendum est, aliquos alios (præter Baptistam et Hieremiam), sanctificatos esse, de quibus Scriptura mentionem non facit."—'Nor is it to be believed, that any others besides the Baptist and Jeremias were sanctified, as Scripture makes no mention of any" (St. Thomas, in 3. p. q. 27.)

‖ "Nihilominus tamen cordati ac prudentis hominis esse existimo, nihil temere aut nimis asseveranter affirmare, quia revera ubi deest Scripturæ auctoritas, aut Ecclesiæ traditio, nulla potest esse sufficiens certitudo in re præsertim ex divina electione ac prædestinatione pendente."—"Nevertheless, I deem it the part of a

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favor to the foster-father of Jesus; but their words, well understood, do not deny the probability, as they merely say that, in the absence of clear testimony to this privilege in Scripture and in the tradition of the Fathers, this grace cannot be maintained as certain and positive.

Segneri,* justly esteemed by all for his eloquence and solid learning, holds as probable and well founded this sanctification of which we speak; and he deduces this from the dignity of Saint Joseph, discussing it like a sound theologian thus: "Joseph was ennobled and singularly privileged with the honor of spouse of the Mother of God: a dignity which is a solid principle, from which it follows with every mark of probability that Saint Joseph was not only sanctified, as we maintain, in his mother's womb, but that he was afterwards confirmed in grace, and exempt from evil, so that no man—we say it boldly—no man on this earth, ever was holier than Joseph."

This conjecture of the venerable Paul Segneri, an author worthy of universal esteem, as we are assured by the great critic and theologian, John Chrysostom Trombelli,† is treated as of no force in the severe judgment of some who vene-

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wise and prudent man to affirm nothing rashly, or too positively, because, indeed, where the authority of Scripture, and the tradition of the Church are wanting, there can be no sufficient certitude, especially in a matter depending entirely on the divine election and predestination." (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. in Pt. III. disp. VIII. sect.* 2. § *In hac igitur.*)

* Da questo principio dunque benissimo si deduce con gran fodezza di versumiglianza, que non sola mente egli fosse sanctificato, come noi solo volevamo, nel sene materno; ma che fosse anche dipoi stabilito in grazia; anzi esentato della malvagita, di maniera, que nessun uomo, diciam lo arditamente, nessun uomo sia stato mai su la terra di lui pui Santo." (SEGNERI, *Quaresmale*, predica per la festa di S. Giuseppe.)

† H. P. Segneri uomo giustamente da tutte apprezato. (P. ABBATE TROMBELLI, *Vita di S. Giuseppe*, *Pt. I.* c. xxxiv.)

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rate as oracles certain critics, who will not distinguish between the probable and the certain. Less severe are they who confound certainty with probability. It is not evident that Saint Joseph was born to grace before he was born to the world, but it is glorious to the Saint to conjecture it, and the more so when great theologians do so, and even the prince * of those who passed for good philosophers in other days, whether more illustrious or more obscure. If we err on this point, we may say with Saint Ambrose,† that the error sprang more from piety than from hardihood.

The opinion which attributes to the foster-father of Jesus the glory of antenatal sanctification was promulgated before a general council by the most learned chancellor John Gerson,‡ the master-spirit, as L'Advocat avers, of the stormy Council of Constance, which he attended on behalf of the court of Versailles, and of the famous University of Paris. To this great man the world is indebted, as Malatesta§ and Patrig-

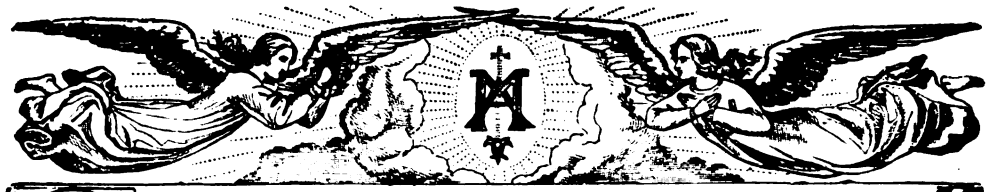
* "Cum hæc doctrina et per se dignior et jucundior, et ad pietatem magis sit accommodata; et ut Aristoteles dixit, melius sit de rebus altioribus vel pauca conjecturare, quam inferiores certitudine etiam mathematica cognoscere"—"As this doctrine is more worthy in itself, more pleasing, and better adapted to piety; and as Aristotle says, it is better even to conjecture a little about what is high, than to know what is inferior with even mathematical certainty." (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. Pt. III. in præfatione.*)

† "Etso error, pietatis tamen error est."—"If error, it is a pious one." (ST. AMBROSE, *De Fide, Lib. V. cap.* ii.)

‡ "Potest hæc dissimilitudo notari Josephum inter et Mariam), in hoc quod Joseph post originale contractum, sanctificatus est in utero baptismo flaminis . . . Sic in officio Hierosolymitano de Joseph composito continetur."—"This dissimilitude may be noted between Mary and Joseph, that Joseph, after contracting original sin, was sanctified in the womb by the baptism of the Spirit." So it is declared in the Jerusalem office, composed for St Joseph. (GERSON, *Sermo de Nativitate Virginis ad Concilium Constantoense.* Consid. II. Tom. III. Ed. Antverp. 1606, p. 1354.)

§ MALATESTA, *Vita di S. Giuseppe, cap.* ii.

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nani* confess, for the precious discovery of some pearls hidden from us for fourteen centuries by the silence of the ancient writers. Many great and able minds followed Gerson in honoring the renowned hero to whom they devoted their pens. Trombelli† does not adopt the opinion of these learned men; but, with his usual discretion and modesty, pays them the honor which their writings deserve. "Theologians have not been wanting," says this learned critic, "who have maintained that Saint Joseph was sanctified in his mother's womb." Gerson, a name of great authority in theology, confirms this grace by the Breviary of Jerusalem, in which he says he read it. He is followed by Isidore Isolano,‡ who by many arguments seeks to show the greater probability of this opinion. Among moderns, Father Reiss§ adorns it, and establishes it with many proofs, averring that this opinion has not a few defenders, such as Carthagena,‖ Diego de Valencia, Theophilus, and Saint Chrysostom, cited by Isidore Isolano, and finally Cornelius a Lapide,¶ whose express words

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* Egli (il Gerson) fu il primo, che scrivendo sopra un soggetto si glorioso (S. Guiseppe), venne a scoprire al mundo una miniera di tante preziosissime margherite, onde fu arricchito da Dio lo Sposo della Vergine Madre. (PATRIGNANI, Lib. I. cap. ii.)

† TROMBELLI, Pt. I. c. iv. n. 1.

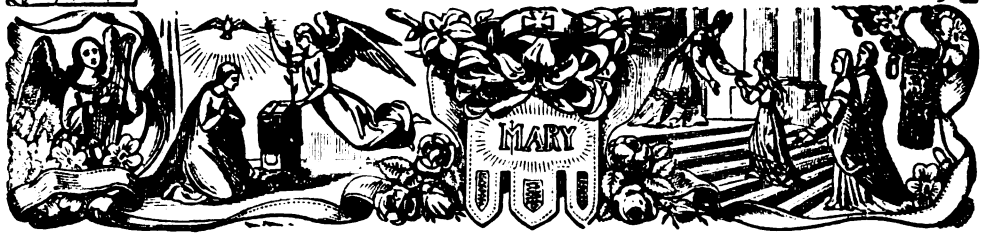
‡ ISOLANO, *Summa de donis S. Josephi, Pt. I. cap.* ix.

§ "Nequaquam pauci sunt præsentis veritatis (id est præmaturæ sanctificationis), sive testes sive fautores."—"The witnesses or approvers of the present truth are by no means few." (F. REISS, *in Josephina Lucernensi, elogio* 2.)

‖ CARTHAGENA, Lib. IV. Hom. III.

¶ Sane si Deus post B. Virginem illud dedit, ejus sponso id ipsum non negasse videtur. (CORNELIUS A LAPIDE, *in Matt. cap.* i.)

Father Trombelli states that he had in his possession a copy of the ancient breviary of Jerusalem, the original of which, written in the twelfth century, is preserved in the library of the Fathers of Santa Maria Cortelandine, according to the account of Manzi, archbishop of Lucca, who kindly sent the said copy to Bologna; it contained no office or commemoration of St. Joseph. The authority



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I cite. They are: "Truly, if God gave this privilege of antenatal sanctification to others beside the Blessed Virgin, it seems impossible to deny that he gave it to her spouse:" whom the eminent Suarez, a theologian no less prudent than learned, declares to be greater than all the Saints of the Old or New Testament." Such is the opinion of the Abate Trombelli, who denies the correctness of those who maintain the antenatal sanctification of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God: as though it were a rule and law of criticism, to deny the Saints all gifts that good conjectures make probable. For the present I have no answer to give, but the judgment of another critic, Vincent Gravina,* a celebrated Roman jurist, who says that critics already exceed their limits, and require a good check to restrain them, inasmuch as they more frequently contradict from passion, or a desire of reproving, than from a desire of letting the truth be known. St. Augustine,† in cases similar to that which we are now dis-

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of Gerson is respected even by critics of our day, and it would be wrong, on the mere existence of a stray copy, unauthorized by any authentic instrument, to dispute his fidelity in citing documents before a General Council, composed of the most learned scholars in every branch of erudition; and we may add that Gerson, as Patrignani observes, was a theologian, whose pen in that age soared above the most famous in France, and that he lived in Paris, where, doubtless, were preserved the true copies of that Breviary, which he alleges to confirm the subject of his discourse.

The Abate Trombelli confesses (Part II. ch. 2. n. 1.)), as do the Continuators of Bollandus, that St. Joseph was honored in the Oriental churches, from the primitive ages, so that it is not probable that Jerusalem, where the holy patriarch died, would pass over his name completely.

* Critices licentiam jam diu esse compressam oportuit. A deo enim emendando critici modum excesserunt; ut non sit amplius id emendandi studium; sed reprehendendi libido furorque rixandi. Quo magis admiror eruditissimi Grævii sobrietatem, qui suis in notis criticum acumen Philosophiæ modestia et veritatis amore temperavit. (GRAVINA, *Origin Juris Avilis. Ad cupidam legum juventutem.*)

† "Si quis de aliquo Sancto affirmet, nunquam peccasse non propriis viribis sed gratia et dono Deis non multum esse cum illo contendendum, sed si id sufficienter

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cussing, was of the opposite opinion, and nevertheless deemed worthy of praise those who with insufficient grounds teach that any saint by the help of grace never sinned. And in fact, when we speak of a saint who has none before him in destiny, none to follow him in his ministry, we must give freer license to the opinions and ideas wherewith we explain and revere devotion which has at its command the treasures of a Sovereign, who, by his most liberal omnipotence, exceeds the idea which historians give us of an Alexander, when they describe him as though he had no other gifts than the attribute of munificence. God is so beneficent, that not even human ingratitude, in its excesses, can withhold the torrent of his ancient mercies.* What grace can we then concede to him, who was chosen to be a spouse to the Mother of Jesus, and to replace the Father, with the Word made man, whom he had to support with the labor of his hands, and hold in his arms as tutor and guardian of that fountain of sanctity and divine example of purity?

Such singular excellencies shine forth in Saint Joseph, that they suppose in this Saint a great soul, superior to all men, enlightened and beatified by celestial favors; because under these undoubted prerogatives are concealed others which may be conjectured from the greatness of the first. All the privileges of the foster-father of Jesus are not, indeed, expressed in the sacred writings, and the teaching and tradition of the Holy Fathers, but we can deduce them from his dignity, according to the text of the Roman oracle, which

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ostendat, illi esse gratulandum."—"If any one affirms that any Saint never sinned, attributing this not to his strength, but to the grace and gift of God, there is no reason for opposing him greatly, and if he shows it sufficiently, we should thank him." (SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Spiritu et Littera*, cap. 2.)

* In whose hands are iniquities, their right hand is filled with gifts. (Ps. xxv. 10.)

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bids us, in all cases and circumstances not expressed and determined in the code, to decide on the gentler side, and according to the merit of the person.*

The grounds which support the opinion favorable to the anticipated sanctification of this great Saint, are his very dignity and ministry, which are unequalled among creatures. By this exalted dignity, Suarez thinks him superior to the Baptist, and to the Apostles ;† and if we credit Hyacinth Serri the Dominican, Suarez alone outweighs a whole university.‡ This illustrious Doctor says that Saint Thomas, and the other writers who place Saint John the Baptist and the Apostle at the head of all other saints, must be so understood as to admit Saint Joseph as an exception to the general clauses in which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient writers speak of saints of the first order.

This doctrine, which gives such clear light for conceding the primacy to the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God, serves also to argue favorably in behalf of his antenatal sanctification. The Scripture does not speak of this privilege with that explicitness and clearness, with which it sets forth the grace which the Almighty bestowed on the Baptist, by

* In his vero, super quibus jus non invenitur expressum, procedas (æquitate servata) semper in humaniorem partem declinando, secundum quod personas . . . videris postulare.

† "Non potest doctrina D. Thomæ universaliter intelligi, ut nullam liceat exceptionem facere. Quod si aliqua admittitur, non est cur temerarium, aut improbabile censeatur, Sanctum Josephum excipere, eumque Apostolis comparare, vel etiam præferre, quia probabile est, Josephum perfectiorem gratiam esse assecutum, quam Joanem Baptistam, quia excellentius munus habuisse videatur."—"St. Thomas's doctrine cannot be taken universally, so as to admit no exception. But if any is admitted, there is no reason for deeming it rash or improbable to except St. Joseph, and equal or prefer him to the Apostles, for it is probable that Joseph attained more perfect grace than St. John the Baptist, for his office was apparently more excellent." (SUAREZ, Tom. II. Part. III. Disp. 8. Sect. 2.)

‡ SERRY, *in Pyrausta.*

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sanctifying him in his mother's womb: but it is, perhaps, because the very prerogatives of Saint Joseph leave scarce any difficulty in establishing the privilege of that Saint who, next to Mary, most nearly of all the blessed, approaches Christ; and whose ministry was so singular, that he belongs neither to the New Testament nor to the Old, but to the author of both Testaments.*

Father Reis, a pious defender of all those privileges of Saint Joseph which are not at variance with the Scriptures and the traditions of the Holy Fathers, appeals to the tribunal of reason to show the probability of the privilege of being sanctified in his mother's womb, which some deny the Holy Patriarch. His argument is as follows: Saint Joseph was chosen by a Lord of infinite wisdom to espouse the Virgin Mother of Jesus. Whence we must suppose between these spouses all that similarity which the sacred writings do not oppose: that is, likeness in favors, and (excepting the happy moment of Mary's conception) likeness in anticipated sanctification, and in all those qualities which make espousals more conformable to that divine decree, whereby God established as a suitable condition, likeness between spouses.† The Mother of God was immaculate in her Conception, and by this grace enjoyed that most singular privilege, which, with the common consent of the faithful, Saint John Damascenus maintains:‡ and to begin with the primitive ages of the

* "Post Virginem Joseph propinquissime attigit Christum . . . Officium autem Josephi non pertinuit ad novum Testamentum, neque proprie ad vetus, sed ad utriusque Auctorem." (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. Pt. III. Disp.* 8, § 2.)

† Let us make *him* a help like unto *him*self. (Gen. ii. 18.) And a poet tells us:—

Si qua voles apte nubere, nube pari.

‡ Quoniam futurum erat, ut Dei genitrix et Virgo ex Anna oriretur, natura gratiæ fœtum antevertere minime ausa est, verum tantisper expectavit, dum gratia

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Church, we have the authority of Fathers and theologians,* innumerable in their array, whose writings with expressions and in a manner far removed from all uncertainty, evince their evident meaning that Mary's purity was such that she had no share in the fall of the first man. This mystery, which the human mind cannot conceive nor the human voice express, Antonio Mendoza, a Spanish priest, has extolled in hymns to the Immaculate Conception of our Queen;† and the celebrated and pious geniuses of our nation, both in books and in paintings, representing the Virgin Mary in the first instant of her natural being, which for her was an instant of grace, have engraved monuments of the piety and veneration which daily reigns more and more, not only in the subjects but in the Catholic sovereigns of the Spanish monarchy now spread over the four quarters of the globe.‡

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fructum suum produxisset. "Since it was to be that the Virgin Mother of God was to be born of Anne, nature did not dare to anticipate the embryo of grace, but waited awhile till grace had produced its fruit." (St. John Damascenus, *De Virginis Mariæ Nativitate.*)

* The Fathers and theologians, from whose words we gather that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin, may be seen in Plaza, *Causa de la Immaculada Conception;* [or later in Passaglia, or the smaller treatises of Lambruschini, *Polemical Dissertation*, Ullathorne.]

† "En cuya valiente imagen,
De Dios, pincel sin defectos.
Son todas las culpas sombras,
Son todas las sombras lejos."

‡ Although I might give almost infinite proofs of the affection to Mary Immaculate in the first instant of her Conception, I shall only mention an engraving issued in my own time at Rome by Miguel Gutierrez, a priest of Santiago, Guatimala. This beautiful engraving, applauded by all persons of good taste, bears the famous text (Esther xv. 73), by which the pious defenders of the dogma show that the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and Mother of the King of heaven and earth, prefigured by Esther, was not included in the common and universal law enacted against all the posterity of the first man. Taking too the text, "Omnes in Adam

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Without overstepping the limits which theology prescribes, we may add with secure confidence that the child who in her conception was destined to be the Mother of God and more immaculate than her most pure spouse Joseph, was, as a great work of the Almighty arm, a prodigy so new and singular, that it never can be repeated, and we believe that she alone was unstained by the guilt common to the posterity of the first man. Hence she beheld herself at the first instant of her being enriched with the most admirable perfections and privileges, raised above all the blessed, and made conformable to the most eminent ideas of the Incomprehensible Wisdom. From the moment, therefore, of her conception, she was the object of the complacency of that Lord, who caused her to be born of the race of David and the branch of Solomon, that she might be the spouse of the purest and happiest of mortals and Mother of the Sinless One.

To think thus of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is not to augur from feeble conjectures her innocence and preservation from the fault entailed on the progeny of Adam ; it is merely to acknowledge the supreme dignity of a Mother whose Immaculate Son, who was to be nothing less than the Man-God, placed and represented her in the front of the firmament and other first works of creation, and under the allegory of a woman victorious over the serpent of Eden. * Of a mother, I repeat, whom the authors of the sacred books, separated from each other by many centuries, differing in age, condition,

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peccaverunt," used in former ages to oppose the mystery, he makes by an anagram "Peccamus; una Mater Dei non;" and accompanies it by the epigram :

Legi quid oppugnor, qua ex cunctis eximor una?
Fœdaque cur fingor, pulchrior unde probor?

which shows the exception contained in the law, of which some availed themselves to combat the original grace of the Mother of God, and ever Virgin Mary.

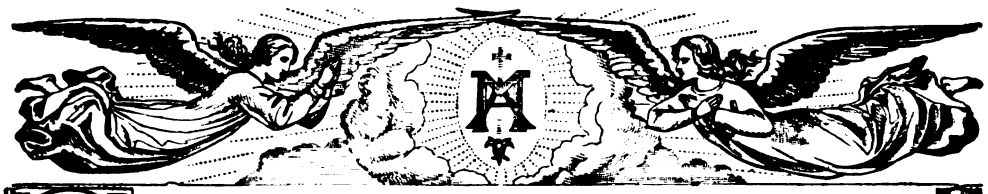
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style, invention, order and union, who could not naturally confront each other, or speak from concert, delineate by representing in beautiful lines, her immaculate being, her perpetual virginity, her unsullied beauty, her excellent virtues, her prerogatives and gifts above all mountains, that is, above all the saints and heavenly spirits. So apt were the symbols and figures, as the event showed, that it is necessary to confess that they are not the work of a mortal hand and art, but designed and imprinted by the Divine Spirit, who wished to show the world various portraits of the Mother of the promised Liberator, and future spouse of that just man, prefigured in the fortunes of that other Joseph, royal minister, and known in the Egyptian monarchy by the title of Father of Pharaoh.

Singular was her privilege, and peculiar to the Queen of the Sovereign Spirits, to the Mother of an Infinite Son; but except this grace, which is unequalled in its line, the other pre-eminences appear common to the Virgin Mary and her illustrious spouse Joseph: so that, examining the designs of the Almighty who created them to be joined together in a sacred espousal, we may confidently affirm that Joseph in his soul and virtues was so clear and so accurate a copy of the Virgin Mary, who was the original, that by merely seeing it or recalling it to memory, we form a beautiful idea of the features and virtues of his spouse, "to whom He that is mighty did great things."

Segneri believes this likeness between the holy pair so great and so general, that we may affirm that the future espousals with Mary caused Saint Joseph's sanctification before his birth. To please those who delight in the sublime thoughts of that great man, we give his words: "Joseph was not a spouse who fell to Mary by chance, or whom our Lady took blindly, as the Spartans foolishly did. He was a spouse, whom God chose with most especial providence, and

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hence suited to all the laws of reason. It was proper, then, that Joseph should resemble the Virgin, not only in royal blood, but also in manners, mind, habits, for none is ignorant that the first gift sought in a spouse is similarity. Hence I consider not far from the truth some doctors who aver that Saint Joseph was sanctified in his mother's womb." Segneri's opinion has in its favor those of Gerson,* Binet,† and the authors cited by him, and coincides with a principle of Canon Law which teaches us to form a similar judgment of similar persons and things,‡ when we know of no exception or diversity to defeat it.

If the likeness between spouses dictated by the laws of prudence, is such as to persuade us that the real spouse of Mary was sanctified before his illustrious birth, it must also be a certain proof that the same spouse bears the mirror of that Virgin's perfections and virtues for whom God created him. Hence we may lawfully infer, that that great man, who was chosen as a spouse of the Blessed Virgin, was not only sanctified before appearing in the light of this world, but was also favored with the use of understanding and free will, which he consecrated to God in an action, termed by theologians the baptism of fire, being that divine love wherewith

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* "Sic decuit ut Maria tanta puritate niteret, sicut dicit Anselmus, qua sub Deo major nequit intelligi, ita decuit, ut Joseph tanta prærogativa polleret, quæ similitudinem et convenientiam exprimeret talis sponsi ad talem sponsam, de qua natus est Jesus."—"As it behooved that Mary should shine with such purity, as Saint Anselm says, that none can be conceived greater under God, so it behooved that Joseph should enjoy such a prerogative as would express the likeness and fitness of such a husband for such a spouse of whom Jesus was born." (Gerson, *Sermo de Nativitate B. V. M.*)

† I find that we have said all, when we say, "Erat autem Joseph factus ad similitudinem Virginis sponsæ suæ."—"Joseph was made to the likeness of his Virgin spouse." (Binet.)

‡ De similibus idem judicium habendum. *Cap. Cum inter incorporalia.*



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rational creatures love their Creator. This similarity to the Blessed Virgin in loving God before birth, was seen by great theologians * in Saint John the Baptist, and consequently in Saint Joseph, as in a Saint to whom both in glory and in the privileges of grace, his ministry and dignity give advantages over all the other blessed.† Nor can we believe that God, who is, I will not say prodigal, but most liberal of his favors, will deny the guardian and foster-father of his only begotten Son made man, the grace which he freely conceded to another saint, who was not of so eminent a dignity nor so supreme a ministry. From the same motive we shall say, that the foster-father of Jesus, the head and in some sort the superior of the Blessed Virgin and of Christ ‡ as man, was confirmed in grace the instant he had the use of reason, by an extraordinary favor of Heaven. By the special confirmation in grace, like that which the Almighty conferred on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph beheld himself freed at least from those venial faults and defects, which are committed with full liberty. This appears probable in a person adorned with so many singular favors, and chosen by God for his Mother's spouse ; as most worthy of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and like her in purity and perfection of life. § The privilege of

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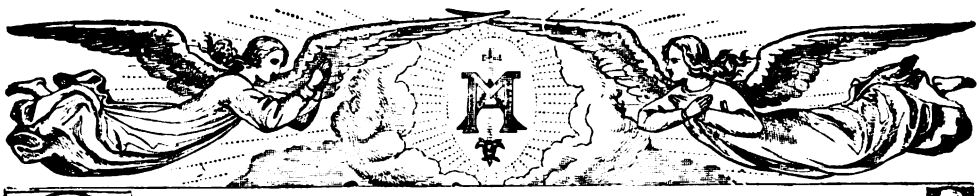
* SUAREZ, *Tom II. in 3 Pt. Disp. 3, art. 3.*

† "In hac igitur comparatione non existimo esse temerarium neque improbabile; sed pium potius et verisimile, se quis fortasse opinetur, Sanctum hunc reliquos omnes in gratia ac beatitudine antecellere; quia ex Scriptura nihil est, quod repugnet nec in Patribus aliquid reperio."—"In this comparison I do not think it rash or improbable, but rather pious and probable, if any one thinks that Saint Joseph excelled all others, in grace and beatitude, because I find nothing in Scripture, or the Holy Fathers, repugnant to it." (SUAREZ, *Tom II. in 3 Pt. Disp.* 8, § 2.)

‡ Ex prædicata radice ortum est, ut B. Joseph aliquo modo fuerit caput et Superior Virginis et Christe ut hominis. (SUAREZ.)

§ "Joseph fuit super homines puros similis Virgini gloriosæ."—"Joseph

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avoiding by a special grace of heaven, every kind of sin, is conceded to Saint John the Baptist by grave theologians, who rely on the authority of Saint Augustine * and a hymn of the Church ;† and I think that these Doctors, whose arguments pass for solid with Suarez, will not deny the same favor to Saint Joseph, when the reasons in his case are at least equal, if not superior.

Nor do jurists seek other causes than equality or advantages in their motives for the extension of a privilege.‡ The Emperor Justinian, speaking of another kind of defects, says, in his code, that to be sinless is more divine than human.§ This text and others more authorized do not deprive Saint

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was above all pure men, like the glorious Virgin." (GERSON, *Sermo de Nativ. B. V. M.*)

* "Præsertim cum Divus Augustinus, qui constantius et frequentius docet, nullum hominem posse vitare omnia peccata, interdum dicet. *Si quis doceat, aliquem fuisse qui non ex viribus liberi arbitrii, sed singulari gratia privilegio illa vitaverit nec temere, nec perniciose errare*" (Lib. de Spiritu et Littera, cap. II.), et Athanasius, sermone quarta contra Arianum dicat: "*Quosdam fuisse puros omni crimine.*" —"Especially as Saint Augustine, who constantly and frequently teaches that no man can avoid all sins, sometimes says: 'If any teach that there has been one, who, not by the strength of free will, but by a singular privilege of grace, has avoided all sin, he has not erred rashly or perniciously;' and Saint Athanasius says: 'Some were pure from every crime.'" (SUAREZ, Tom. II. in Pt. 3. disp. XXIV. § 4.)

† Antra deserti teneris sub annis,
Civium turmas, fugiens, petisti
Ne levi posses maculare vitam,
Crimine linguæ.

In caves of the lone wilderness thy youth
Thou hidest, shunning the rude throng of men,
And guarding the pure treasure of thy soul,
From the least touch of sin.

‡ Quando ratio concedendi æque, vel magis in aliis reperitur, extenditur privilegium. When the reason exists equally or more in others, the privilege is conceded. (SCHNORREMBERG, *in cap. Odia restringi de regulis juris in sexto.*)

§ Penitus in nullo peccare, divinitatis magis quam mortalitatis est. (*Lege Tanta*, § 2, 14 c.)



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Joseph of the rare perfection and singular purity of his life: because this Saint must for his dignity, and for that especial grace wherewith the Almighty arm enriched him, be considered as an exception from general clauses. Joseph, spouse of Mary, and foster-father of Jesus, was also a soul like the Mother of God in virtues, and to be so, it was proper that he should have heroic virtues, on which all that is rare and singular should be resplendent; for as even a pagan philosopher could say, he is not a great man who has not raised himself above what is merely human, or done more than other men. This greatness the world began in some sort to see in that first Joseph, so applauded as unequalled in his birth: * for if he was great and the most distinguished among the sons of Jacob, he owed it to the spouse of the Mother of Jesus, whom the Almighty appointed him to represent, as well in his birth as in his exalted fortunes. On the other hand this purity of life, which betrayed none of the defects common to men, when they are not specially favored by Heaven, is a point, in which the error, if any, is neither rash nor pernicious in the judgment of Saint Augustine: † and if the opinion is upheld by solid arguments, it redounds to the glory of Jesus and Mary, who thus had, the one a foster-father, ‡ the other § a spouse of the highest perfection.

Ancient writers, although they all spoke honorably of Saint Joseph, nevertheless, withheld their pens from treat-

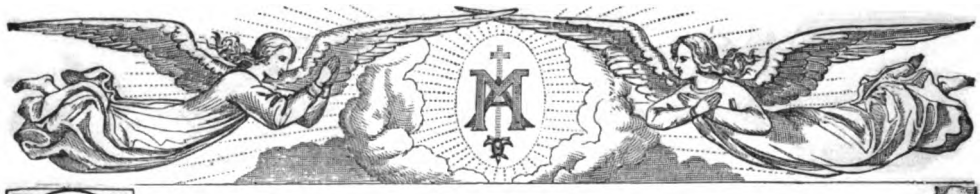
* "No man was born upon the earth like . . . Joseph." (Ecclesiasticus xix. 16.) "Respondeo hæc figuraliter dici de illo Josepho, quatenus figura fuit nostri Mariæ sponsi."—"I answer that this was said figuratively of that Joseph, as far as he was a figure of our Joseph, the spouse of Mary." (SEDELMAYR, *num.* 978. *Theologiæ Marianæ.*)

† ST. AUGUSTINE, already cited.

‡ "The glory of children are their fathers." (Prov. xvii. 6.)

§ "Tamdiu clarissima fœmina erit, quandiu Senatori nupta est vel clarissimo," is a maxim of the civil law. (*Lege Fœminæ* 8, *de Senatoribus.*

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ing any privileges of this Saint, either because they supposed them as consequences of his excellent dignity placed in the hypostatic order, or because Heaven, by an adorable providence, reserved for these later times discoveries as to his sanctity and virtues, which are every day better illustrated by the productions of numberless men of genius, who, animated by the fruitful greatness of the hero whom they describe, have devoted themselves to unfold to the world, what the silence of the ancients left hidden and concealed, like a rich treasure, under the incomparable dignity of foster-father of Jesus and spouse of the Queen of the Blessed. Among other writers we may name in North America, Doctor John Joseph Eguiara,* matin professor of scholastic theology, and chancellor of the University of Mexico, and bishop elect of Yucatan, and the eminent divine, Father Anthony Peralta, professor in the college of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the same city,† who show in their works, that amid the rich treasures and prodigies of fertility and abundance in that climate, and the benign influence of that sky, geniuses arise as radiant as gold ; who are unesteemed only because strangers, ignorant of those fertile American realms, imagine that all the culture and perfection of rational nature is limited to some parts of Europe.

Amid these writers who have devoted their pens to the prerogatives of Saint Joseph, are some who not only defend his rare heroic sanctity, but, moreover, conjecture that by an especial privilege of the Almighty, wishing to choose him for the highest post, he was born free from concupiscences which are the cruel incentives of sin, and it appears that Saint Augustine, whose words we shall hereafter cite,

* Doctor Eguiara, Tom. I. 22. *Theologicarum, Tractate de Divo Josepho.*

† P. Antonius Peralta, *Dissertatio de Sancto Josepho.*



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inclined to this mode of argument, when he said that the greater purity of Saint Joseph was a confirmation of the paternity to which the Infinite Wisdom destined him.

Some critics,* zealous, as they aver, of the public weal, who pretend to regulate devotion, and prevent piety from passing certain limits, do not admit the privilege of exemption from the war of the passions : but yet even they, repressing the outbursts of their criticism, at the glorious examples which they find in Saint John the Baptist, and the angelic youth Saint Aloysius,† allow us to believe that the most pure spouse of the Immaculate Virgin had all his passions subject to the sway of reason, and so repressed, that they had no power or strength to offend or disturb the most pure Patriarch ; especially from the hour when he celebrated his espousals with the Mother of purity. This favor, if not absolutely certain, is at least most suited to a man of such exalted purity of soul and body, so much so that solid writers have felt themselves bound to say,‡ that he was more of an angel than a man in the whole course of his life ; that by his dignity and ministry he acquired a calm of soul and serenity of heart corresponding to the family with which he dwelt.§

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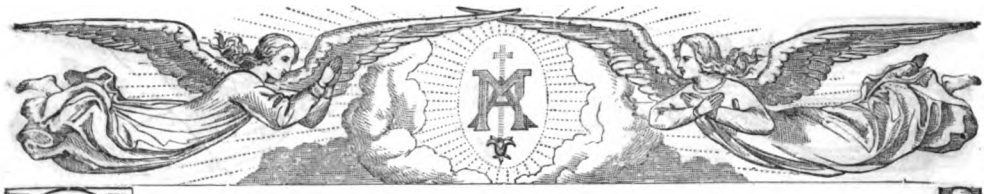
* Appunto pere renderlo sposo degno di Maria Santissima, bastera a tal fine, que ammetiamo la concupicenza repressa, et per sevirmi della frase de gli scolastici *legata e doma*, allor quando dovea contrare gli sponsali con Maria o al meno non molto prima. (TROMBELLI, *Pt.* 1. *c.* 6. *n.* 7.)

† As he was declared by the Roman Rota in these words : "Aloysius nunquam stimulos carnis passus es."—"Aloysius never felt the stings of the flesh." (CEPARI, *Life of St Aloysius.*)

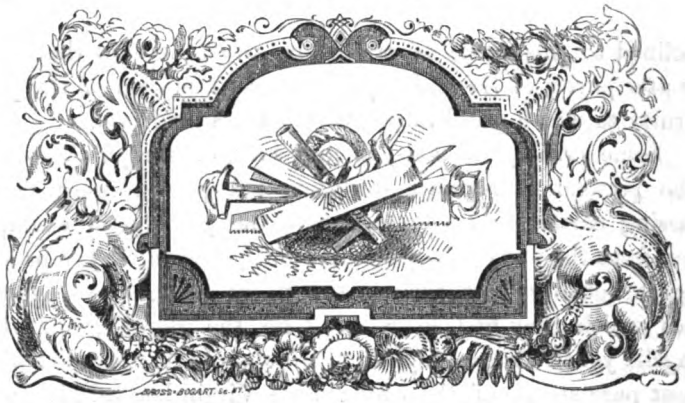
‡ Cornelius a Lapide. *Cap.* 1, *in Matth.*

§ Quanto enim quilibet præ est melioribus, tanto major ipse et honestior est. (*Authentic. tit.* 2 *de Defensoribus civit Novel.* 15.)

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CHAPTER II.

OF THE BIRTHPLACE OF ST. JOSEPH, AND THE AVOCATION WHICH HE FOLLOWED.

SMYRNA, for the love of that glory which great men give the site of their birth, disputes with other famous cities the credit of having given birth to Homer, the prince of Grecian poets.* With better reason may Bethlehem of Juda and Nazareth maintain this glorious contest as to Saint Joseph, the most illustrious hero produced by Judea, mother of illustrious men, who show posterity its ancient glories by the splendor of their lives. Bethlehem, otherwise called Ephrata (which signifies a fertile or abundant spot), is a town or city, small indeed in the number of its buildings and inhabitants, but eminent for the birth of princes who yield to none in anti-

* Homerum Colophonii civem esse dicunt suum: Chii suum vindicant: Salaminii repetunt: Symrnæi vero suum esse confirmant . . . Permulti alii præterea pugnant inter se atque contendunt. (CICERO.)





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quity of noble origin : * not content with the fame and glory which it acquired by the birth of the Messias, our Divine Redeemer, it numbers among its sons and citizens Saint Joseph also ; thus giving the same birthplace to the foster-father and his adopted son. To uphold its pretensions this city puts forward a book entitled : " The Gospel of the birth of Mary," which dates back to the primitive ages of Christianity, and the traditions of the ancient Egyptians or Copts preserved in a life of Saint Joseph, which was written by the early oriental Christians. These documents taken generally, and without reference to particular points in them, are rejected by critics as apocryphal and of no authority, so that they cannot be advanced alone as proof, even of facts, acknowledged not to be fabulous.

Calino thinks that Bethlehem was not the birthplace of Saint Joseph, but the place in which his family arose, and for this reason the saint styled himself of Bethlehem, because in Juda each one was compelled to appear in person and give his name, not in the city where he lived, or where he was born, but in that which gave birth to the family from which he descended. As the Blessed Virgin and her spouse were then of the family of David, they came to Bethlehem of Juda to give their names, and by this act declare themselves subjects of the Roman Empire.† Trombelli to some extent adopts the same opinion as Calino, and proposes it as follows :

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* Michæas (v. 2), says that *Bethlehem is the least*, that is, if we consider the buildings, citizens, population ; but it is " by no means the least," if we consider the princes who came or were to come from it. (TIRINUS.)

† Nella Guidea ognuno era obligato a dare personalmente il nome non nella citta, dove abitava o dove era nato ; ma nella citta d' onde era orionda la sua famiglia. E perche Maria Vergine e S. Giuseppe suo sposo erano della famiglia di Davide, e oriondi di Betleme, qua vennero a dar il nomme, e con tal ommagio a professarsi suggetti all' Imperio Romano. (CALINO, Tom. IV. Lib. III. cap. 1.)

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Nazareth in the gospel of Saint Luke is called the city of Mary and Joseph: which undoubtedly shows, that city was either his birthplace, or at least that in which he had taken up his abode.* Nazareth was in those days a small city, and as the erudite Tirinus writes, about two leagues distant from Mount Thabor, in Lower Galilee, and within the limits of the tribe of Zabulon. The tribes after the sad captivity of Babylon became intermingled, and abandoned the ancient order and divisions established and marked by distinct boundaries, either to people the promised land, or to escape the wars constantly waged on them by foreign nations. Hence the tribe of Juda extended its possessions over other tribes; and in this way Saint Joseph had a house in the city of Nazareth, a dwelling which, transported by the ministry of angels to the march of Ancona, in the states of the Church, on the shores of the Adriatic, is now, according to a constant tradition of five centuries, venerated under the name of the Holy House of Loretto.

Nazareth, and in general all Galilee, was a despised country; and without any other reason than their coming from it, the Galileans were reputed a vile and useless race. Father Calino also affirms that there is nothing to show whether the house of Nazareth, in which the Divine Word became incarnate, was an inheritance which descended to the Blessed Virgin from her parents, or a possession of Saint Joseph: † but Saint John Chrysostom ‡ and Saint Thomas

* Nazareth pure si chiama citta di Maria e di Giuseppe. (Luc. ii. 29.) Il che fuor di dubbio indica o la loro patria o almeno la stabile loro residenza. (Trombelli, Part. I. cap. iii. n. 1.)

† Se la casa di Nazareth, dove prese carne umana il Verbo Eterno, fosse di S. Giuseppe, e si Maria cola abitasse, come in casa del suo sposo; o pure fosse di Maria, et Giuseppe cola abitasse, come credita della sua sposa in verita nol sappiamo (Calino, IV. Lib. III. cap. i.)

‡ "Hunc quippe morem plerumque tenebat antiquitas, ut sponsæ in sponsorum

Aquinas * say that it belonged to Mary's most holy spouse: and that the Virgin dwelt there, it being the Hebrew custom for the wife to go and take up her residence in the house of her husband.

Notwithstanding all this, it seems more in accordance with the gospel that Bethlehem of Juda was Saint Joseph's birthplace. This is the opinion of Saint John Chrysostom, who clearly says that Saint Joseph and Mary were natives of Bethlehem, and that leaving their native city, they went to Nazareth, where they took up their abode. †

Of the occupation of the foster-father of Jesus, we have no authority but that light with which the common consent of men enlightens us. From the gospel alone it is evident that the Jews called Christ the mechanic's son, without designating his particular trade, or telling us what specifically is meant by the term *fabri filius*, "son of the artisan." ‡ Some think that by this word, which means "he who fabricates," may be understood the Almighty Father who wrought the Aurora and the sun. The word may well bear this signification which is given it by Saint Jerome,§ Saint Tho-

domibus haberentur, quod nunc quoque fieri interdum videmus."—"In ancient times it was generally the case that the wife was received into the house of the spouse, as we see sometimes even now." (St. Chrysostom, *Hom. IV. in Matth.*)

* St. Thomas, *in Pt.* 3, *q.* 29, *art.* 1. *ad.* 1.

† "Itaque cum Joseph et Maria cives Bethleemitæ relicta patria, in Nazareth vitam instituissent et illic commorarentur."—"Therefore Joseph and Mary, citizens of Bethlehem, leaving their native place, took up their abode at Nazareth and resided there." (St. John Chrysostom, Tom. II. Hom. 31, in *Servatoris Nostri Jesu Christi diem natalem.*)

‡ Matthew xiii. 55.

§ "Vere enim erat filius fabri, quia per ipsum in principio omnia fecit, qui fabricatus est Auroram et solem, Ecclesiam scilicet primitivam et sequentem."—"For he was indeed the son of a worker, because by him in the beginning he did all things, who wrought the Dawn and the Sun, that is, the primitive and later Church." (St. Jerome, *cited by Cardinal Hugo.*)

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mas, * and Saint Ambrose or Saint Maximus, to whom the monks of St. Maur attribute the sermon on the birth of Christ, which before the examination of these critics was ascribed to Saint Ambrose; † but I do not believe that the Jews had such lofty thoughts; on the contrary, it appears very certain that the Jews spoke of a mechanical trade, such as was usual among the common people. The commentators and theologians divided into various opinions, pretend to say what the Jews omitted or expressed but generally. Some imagine that Jesus and Joseph his supposed father worked in silver and gold.‡ Baptist, the Mantuan, a flowery poet, who made Carmel a new Parnassus, and in the fifteenth century restored Latin poetry to its ancient splendor, carried away evidently by the impulse of his poetic inspiration, wrote in elegant verses that Saint Joseph used the chisel with such skill and ability, that Myron, Praxiteles, and Phidias himself would have applauded his sculpture. This passes for an extravagant opinion, the fancy of a poet, who, without citing authorities, relates as real facts what might have happened, or he is pleased to suppose really happened, and it is therefore unnecessary for us to examine his opinion seriously, much as we may admire his genius.§

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* Quamvis etiam dici possit filius fabri, qui fabricatus est Auroram et Solem (St. Thomas, *in Matt.* xiii. 55.) And more clearly St. Augustine, or the author of the Sermon on the Nativity, cited by St. Thomas.

† Saint Ambrose, *Serm.* 4 *and* 6, *in Nativ. Domini.*

‡ See Calmet, Dictionary of the Bible (*verbo* Joseph), where he says: Cardinal Hugo (in Mark vi.), calls him a goldsmith, but does not condemn the opinion that he was a carpenter.

§ Ipse Myron laudasset opus, laudasset et ipse
Praxiteles, nec Phidiaco cessisset honori
Seu ferrum, seu mallet ebur, seu sculpere cedram
Promptus erat.

Bapt. Mantuanus, *Parthen.* Lib. III.

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Others, showing less favor to Saint Joseph, noble as he was, give him the painful trade of blacksmith, with no authority but the word "faber," by which the Jews explained the occupation of the father of Jesus: because, they say, that this word "faber," without any other noun to determine its general signification, means "a blacksmith;" just as jurisconsults and even legislators usually express the species by the name of the genus.* This opinion is maintained by Saint Leander† and Saint Isidore,‡ and may be confirmed by the custom in Italy, where the word "fabro," used without any qualifying word, means a smith. Saint Ambrose, following

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* Arcessatur *faber*, ut istas compedes tibi adimam.
"Let a smith be brought to take off thy fetters."
PLAUTUS, *Capt. III.* v. 75.

Mollibus e stratis opera ad *fabrilia* surgit.
"From downy couch he hies him to the forge."
ÆNEID, VIII. 415.

As for jurists, see Vinnius *De Adoptionibus*.

The poets cited for the use of the word *faber* are not an absolute proof; as from the exigency of the metre, they sometimes take the genus for the species; and if the privilege is not conceded, we may say that *faber* means smith in their verses, from the rest of the phrase, or the person whom they describe, being otherwise known to be a smith. Jurists usually apply the generic term to the species, but in that case they give notice of the fact, and are forced to use it from the infinite variety of matters treated of, and the want of words for each particular species. This is not the case in the matter which we are now considering, as words were not wanting to determine specifically the trade meant by the word *faber*, or the corresponding Greek word.

† Certe Joseph faber ferrarius fuisse legitur. (ST LEANDER, *De Instit. Virg. cap.* 14.) "Surely Joseph was as we read a smith." This text of St. Leander shows what we asserted, that another word was always added to *faber* to convey the meaning of smith.

‡ Faber a faciendo ferrum impositum nomen habet. (ISIDORUS, Etymolog. Lib. xix. cap. 6.)

The use of the word *fabro* in Italy is not conclusive, as we are now speaking of another language, in which words have their own peculiarities of meaning, given by the will of men, on whom the signification of words depends.

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Theophilus of Antioch * assigns to Saint Joseph the profession of architect, inasmuch as the word used by the sacred Evangelists, may well mean a master or builder who directs the construction of a house.† If the foster-father of Jesus pursued these different employments, it redounds to his skill and ability, and shows his talent for all. This too may have been meant by the Jews when they called Christ the carpenter's son ; the word carpenter being used as synonymous with all employments. The truth is as Suarez observes, ‡ that hitherto no one has established by solid and irrefragable arguments what was the profession and employment of Saint Joseph ; nor indeed can any proof be given but the universally received opinion of men, founded on a tradition, which though it does not prove the employment to evidence, yet renders it at least probable. I do not hereby, however, mean to accept all the writings in which this tradition is according to some preserved.

I am aware that others,§ even among modern critics, base their opinion on the books entitled "The Protevangelion of James," and the "Gospel of the Infancy ;" but these being apocryphal and full of fables, cannot give authority to the traditions which they contain, and if they are occasionally cited by Origen, St Epiphanius, and other Fathers of the primitive church (as we see by the prologue of Fabricius to

* CALMET, *Comment in Matt.* xii. 35. "Ambrosius (in Luc. III.), inquit Josephum vacasse evellendis, cædendisque arboribus, domibus ædificandis, aliisque idgenus operibus : quod ex Theophilo Antiocheno mutuatus."—"Ambrose says, that Joseph was engaged in taking up, and felling trees, building houses, and the like ; this he derived from Theophilus of Antioch."

† Τέκτων, architectus, structor, ædificator. (SCHREVELIUS, *Lexicon*) A builder, worker in wood, *rarely* in metal, a master of any art, a planner, a poet. (LIDDELL AND SCOTT.)

‡ SUAREZ. *Tom. II. in 3 part. Disp. 8. Sect. ultima.*

§ TROMBELLI. Life of St. Joseph, Pt. I. cap. 34.



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the Protevangelion), they are never cited as the sole grounds on which they rely, nor do I believe that they are ever cited by them in support of any point held fabulous by the common consent of critics of sound judgment. Calmet alleges them * to decide the controversy as to Saint Joseph's occupation; but he notes their want of authority, and cites them as conformable to ancient, well received tradition. The same opinion must be entertained of the works of the ancient Egyptians or Copts and other oriental Christians not Catholics, in which it is stated expressly that the foster-father of Jesus followed the carpenter's trade. The continuers of Bollandus † in this matter rely on these books, as being conformable to the most constant tradition, as we see by the dialogue of Saint Justin the martyr,‡ by the ancient documents published by the most learned Canon Mazzochi,§ by Saint

* Non auctoritatem moror horum operum, sed vetustatem et veteris receptæ traditionis testimonium. (CALMET, Dissertatio in S. Josephum.)

† "Kalendaria Coptica ad vigesimam diem Julii festum S. Jošephi referunt, et in eo quidem, quod apud Seldenun est, libro de Synedriis Hebræorum ad calcem expressum additur; fabri lignarii."—"The Coptic calendars on the 20th of July, celebrates the feast of St. Joseph, and in the book De Synedriis Hebræorum in Selden, it is expressly added: fabri lignarii—carpenter." (ACTA SANCTORUM PAPEBROCHIUS, ad 19 March. Comment. Histor. de S. Joseph, § 11.)

‡ JUSTIN MARTYR. Dialogue with Trypho. (Edition St. Maur 186. Cologne 316, says: "Jesus, Joseph fabri lignarii filius haberetur . . . aratra et juga conficiens."—"Jesus was regarded as the Son of Joseph, a worker in wood . . . making ploughs and yokes."

The Leipsic editors (supp. ad nova acta), in reply to Anthony Sandino, who cited this text, allege, that the original Greek of Justin has merely a word which may mean either worker in iron or worker in wood. But I think they err, because the reference to ploughs and yokes, shows that Justin meant to convey the idea of a carpenter.

§ MAZZOCHI de Ascia, Annot 247. "Venio ad Evangelium Infantiæ celebre in primordio Ecclesiæ, in quo inter carbones, haud raro et gemmas reperias."—"I now come to the Gospel of the Infancy, famous in the early Church, in which, amid cinders, you not unfrequently find a gem."

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Basil,* by the author of the imperfect work on Saint Matthew, formerly attributed to Saint John Chrysostom, but now regarded as of an ancient Latin author, worthy of praise except in a few expressions unfavorable to the divinity of the Word. Saint John Chrysostom is for the same opinion,† because, speaking of the mechanics termed *faber* in Latin, he says that they made ploughs, yokes, cars, and other things of wood.

Mazzochi attributes the same opinion to Hippolytus of Thebes, but in this author we find merely words signifying an artificer, without determining the nature of the work; inasmuch as hitherto they have failed to prove that men by common consent, on which the meaning of words depends, used the word *faber* to signify carpenter. It is true that sometimes general words, for some special reason are made to denote particular individuals; thus rhetoricians by the word "the apostle" mean St Paul, by "the poet," Virgil; but this mode of speech is admitted by the common consent of men, and we have no proof of such consent in the case of the Greek word in question. That word, and its Latin equivalent in the Vulgate, must be considered common terms, unless joined to other words which determine their signification. We see this by the commentaries on the Gospels made from the origin of the church among the Greeks, cited by Mazzochi, where another word is always added when they wish to convey the idea that Saint Joseph was a carpenter.‡

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* St. Basil, *Homilia de humilitate.*

† St. Chrysostom, *apud Canonicum Mazzochi de dedicat, sub ascia annot.* 339.

‡ "Inter orientales Evangeliorum interpretationes Syriacam omnium antiquissimam esse, et ad Ecclesiæ nascentis primordia referri, eamdemque ad Græcos codices elaboratam fuisse, nemo ambigit. Ibi tum apud Matthæum, tum apud Marcum pro vocabulo Græco vox *Nagra* appenditur, quæ sine controversia fabrum liguarium significat . . . Ut et Arabs ibidem habet: *Eben alnagiar*, ligna secantis,

Cornelius a Lapide * and other eminent defenders of this idea, add this conjecture in its favor. Christ followed the same occupation as Joseph his foster-father: and who is ignorant that Jesus followed the trade of a carpenter? Our Lord shows this, in the sermons which he made as well to his apostles as to the people, in which he often uses metaphors or similitudes drawn from the plough, the yoke, and other articles made by carpenters; † for nothing in the world is more common than for men to use in conversation the terms of the art or science which they profess.

"This conjecture," says Trombelli, "I do not despise; but I do not deem it an argument of much weight; for by the same reasoning we may prove that Christ was a farmer from his use of the words *plough* and *yoke*. Another conjecture weighs more in my estimation; and it is that the celebrated Hardouin, who made it a point to differ from received opinions and walk by untrod paths, commenting the text of Saint Matthew, says expressly that Saint Joseph was a carpenter." ‡

Others pretend to prove Saint Joseph's business by the

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sive fabri lignarii filius. Has vero duas interpretationes tantumdem esse, ac Orientis totius consensionem, tum de notione Evangelici, tum de Nazarethicæ familiæ artificio, nemo non videt."—"No one doubts but that the Syriac is the most ancient oriental version, and must be ascribed to the earliest period of the Church, nor that it was made from Greek manuscripts. Both in Matthew and Mark it gives *Nagra*, for the Greek word, and this word indisputably means carpenter . . . The Arabic too has *Eben alnagiar*, son of a wood-cutter, or carpenter. Every one will see that these two versions show the consent of the East as to the meaning of the Gospel, and the occupation of the family of Nazareth. (Mazzochi, *De Ascia*, Annot, 348.)

* It is a common opinion that Christ was a carpenter, as St. Thomas teaches after St. John Chrysostom. (A Lapide, in Matt. xiii. 55, and Mark vi. 3.)

† Take my yoke upon you. (Matt. ix. 29.) My yoke is sweet. (Matt. ix. 30.) No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back. (Luke ix. 62.)

‡ Trombelli, Pt. 1, ch. 34, num. 27–30.

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ancient images and paintings which portray him in the occupation of a carpenter. Pictures, if we consider them critically, are very much like books ;* and like them, generally speaking, are not always admitted as testimony of facts, and moreover the testimony of painters is lessened from the fact that they have in some sort lost their authority by the license, which they with the poets often take, of painting blindly. It is certain that some pictures are symbolical, and purposely made so ; more to represent some mystery than to portray any real fact ; and others are mere creations of the fancy of the artist. One example will suffice to show fully the freedom and uncriticalness of the artist's pencil : Saint Jerome, who flourished in the first ages of the church, is painted with the insignia which Cardinals began to wear in the thirteenth century.†

For this and similar reasons paintings cannot always be cited as proof of ancient things ; hence we recur to other sources which have preserved the tradition of the employment of the foster-father of Jesus. We must however remark with the learned Trombelli, that the holy patriarch had no public shop for the pursuit of his calling ; but exercised it privately at home, and, as suited a person of his character, in silence and aloof from men.‡

Even had the most noble spouse of Mary publicly exercised this business, it would not affect his honor, nor obscure his illustrious lineage ; at least in those days, when among

* Quid est pictura quam picta seu viva scriptura ? quam picta historia ? (MOLANUS, *Historia picturarum.*)

† MOLANUS.

‡ "The shop of Joseph was not common to many, but reserved to himself and the child Jesus; this is most probable, as Joseph was most retired and pious, and such gifts ill accord with many living and laboring together." (TROMBELLI, Pt. 1, ch. 2. numb. 14.)

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the Jews it was not inconsistent with nobility to work in wood, nor was feeding flocks an obscurity of that splendor which distinguished the Hebrew patriarchs and kings amid the people.* Perhaps for this reason those authors who treat of nobility have not accorded or agreed as to its definition. Aristotle conceives nobility as a glory founded on illustrious ancestors.† Boethius places it in the esteem and praise due those who spring from ancestors of high merit.‡ A jurisconsult of great fame deems noble to mean one of virtue and wealth.§ Among the early Romans poverty, at times, sufficed to make even senators and knights descend to the order and class of plebeians; and at others, the husbandman left his plough to assume the lofty post of consul.‖ Among the Jews Besaleel, who like Joseph was of the tribe of Juda, was the workman who made the tabernacle.¶ These examples give us light and argument to refute Celsus and the heresiarchs who reduce the Mother of God to the lowest order of the populace, from the mechanical employment of her most holy spouse Joseph.**

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* "Patriarchæ greges paverunt, et Petrus piscatoris gessit officium."—"The patriarchs fed flocks, and Peter was a fisherman." (St. Fructuosus, *in Regula Communi, ch.* 9.)

† Nobilitas est claritas majorum. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, v. 51.)

‡ Nobilitas est laus veniens exmeritis majorum. (Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosoph. III.* 6.)

§ Nobilitas est virtus conjuncta cum divitiis. (Tiraquel, De Nobilitate, cap. 2.)

‖ If from loss of property, the income was lessened, a senator would by the Censor's order, pass to the Equestrian rank, if he had a knight's income; but if his property did not suffice for this, he descended to the plebeians . . . In early times not only the lowest order, but senators and patricians, when not at war, and all was quiet at home and abroad, devoted themselves to agriculture; so that Dictators and Consuls were called from the plough. (Gravina, *De ortu et progressu juris civilis.*)

¶ Exodus xxxvii. 1.

** See Sedelmeyer, *Theologia Mariana*, Pt. 1. q. 3. art. 2. numb. 156.

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CHAPTER III.

OF THE ESPOUSALS OF SAINT JOSEPH WITH THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND HIS AGE AT THE TIME.

DIRECTLY after the Blessed Virgin reached the age when, according to the Hebrew ritual, she was to leave the temple, the priests, as her father was dead, settled on her state of life. They met to deliberate and resolve the subject, and by light from on high, decided that she should marry one of the same tribe and family; on which none was found better qualified than Joseph, as in him were combined in an exceeding degree, all the qualities worthy of so singular a virgin. This is the account given in the ancient narratives cited by the learned Francis Suarez.* By the resolution of this assembly,

* "Sacerdotes vero iniisse consilium, quid de sacro illo corpore statuerent . . . Tandem vero divina inspiratione et instinctu decrevisse, eam tradere nomine dispensationis cuidam viro ad custodiendam eius virginitatem idoneo; qualis Joseph ex eadem familia et tribu inventus et existimatus est. Ita fere Gregorius Nysse-

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the most august among the Jews, were decided the espousals of the Blessed Virgin with the step-son of Mathan and first-born of Jacob, and the marriage was celebrated with the consent of the spouses and the agreement of the families, which were the formalities required in wedlock in Israel: adding the ceremony of the nuptial ring, which the man put on the woman's finger in the presence of two witnesses, with these words: "Receive this ring, whereby thou art my wife, according to the rite of Moses and Israel." * The Bollandists relate that the ring which Saint Joseph gave the Blessed Virgin is preserved at Perugia, a place happier in the possession of this treasure than for its antiquities. This Perugia is a city of Umbria, belonging to the dominions of the Church, and on the borders of the territory of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Those who are convinced that the Hebrews used a gold ring in spousals, express no doubt as to the matter of the ring venerated at Perugia.†

The Blessed Virgin certainly contracted a true and perfect marriage with Saint Joseph, as Suarez, citing all the theologians of his time, teaches; otherwise the gospel would not say that Jesus was reputed to be the son of Joseph.

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nus, (*Homilia de Christi Nativ*), Damascenus (*De fide Lib. IV. c.* 5), et alii auctores supra citati."—"But the priests had held a consultation, what they should do with that sacred body . . . At last, by divine inspiration, they resolved to give her in the form of espousals to some man, proper to preserve her virginity; such was Joseph esteemed, and found, a man of the same tribe and family. So say St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his homily on the birth of Christ, and St. John Damascenus in his work on faith, and other esteemed writers (SUAREZ, *Tom II. Pt. III. Disp.* 7.)

* Sponsus sponsæ digito duobus coram testibus annulum accommodat, dicens: Ecce tibi annulum, quo mea sis uxor juxta ritum Moysis et Israel. (CALMET, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, verbo *Noces.*)

† Nunc ad se vocat Virginis conjugii obses annulus cujus possessione felix se Perusium Umbriæ civitas credit. (Father Daniel Papebroke, *in the Acta Sanctorum*, March 11.)

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This illustrious theologian places this marriage among the truths which we must confess for our faith,* and to confirm this adds a famous text, on which Saint Ambrose says that Our Lord preferred to have some doubt his generation, by esteeming him a son of Joseph, rather than doubt the purity and good name of his Mother. The holy Doctor means that God, with the view that no one should dare to impugn Our

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* Probatur eadem veritas (fidei scilicet circa matrimonium Mariam inter et Joseph initum), ex traditione Patrum ex quibus nonnulla referuntur in Decreto c. 26, q. 2, et Ambrosius in Lucam, cap. 1, ubi illa ratione utitur; Quia maluit Dominus quosdam de sua generatione, quam de Matris pudore dubitare."—"The same truth is proved by the tradition of the Fathers, some of whom are cited in the decree, c. 26, q. 2, and St. Ambrose on St. Luke, where he uses this argument: Because our Lord preferred to have doubts as to his generation, than as to his mother's honor." (SUAREZ, Tom. II. in Pt. III. Disp. 7, sect. 1.)

The Venerable Peter Canisius, in his life of the Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary (Bk. II. c. 11), notes that not a few of the ancients speak of the union of St. Joseph, and the most Sacred Virgin, as though they had not passed beyond what are commonly called espousals, that is promises of marriage. "But," he adds, "St. Augustine in his book on nuptials (c. 14), acknowledges, and often maintains that there was a true, legitimate marriage between Joseph and Mary. Many ancient writers seem to agree with him, who admit only that first union in spousals, and say that the spouses never proceeded to the nuptials and marriage. In Abdea's Life of St. Bartholomew, we read that Joseph had Mary as a spouse, not as a married wife. St. Jerome too commenting the words, "Joseph took the child and its mother," adds, as being a foster-father, and not a husband.

These expressions of the ancients, continues Canisius, well understood, and taken in the sense in which the authors used them, mean simply that Joseph and Mary did not use the marriage rights; nor were two in one flesh as the married are, who by the use of the sacrament of matrimony, or mingling of the bodies, represent the union of Christ and his Church. The Fathers also by such words as, "There was no marriage," "Joseph was not a husband," "the espoused did not proceed beyond the espousals," and the like, mean that Joseph and Mary, although they had publicly contracted marriage, yet lived as if they were merely betrothed. He adds, that Isaias seems to manifest this where he prophesies that a young man shall dwell with a virgin, rather as a spouse than a husband. "For the young man shall dwell with the virgin . . . and the bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride." (Isaias lxii. 5)

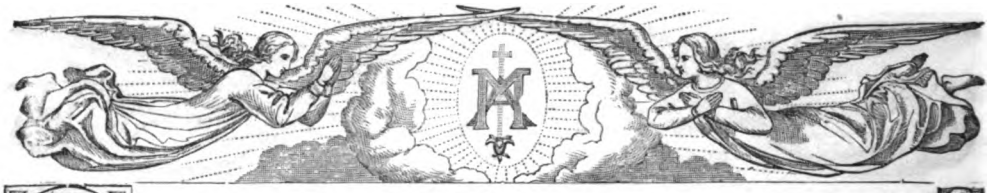
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Lady's purity, chose to be born of a Virgin publicly married. From these words of Saint Ambrose we also collect, that Saint Joseph never doubted the honor and fidelity of his most holy spouse: because it is incredible that the Infinite Wisdom of heaven, which by a public alliance prevented the Jews from obscuring the splendor of his Mother's purity, would permit it to be doubted only by her spouse, whom the honor and good name of his wife so nearly concerned.

The Blessed Virgin, notwithstanding the consecration of her virginity to God, accepted the union with Joseph, directed by a supernatural impulse, and, as some think, with an express stipulation that he should not use the marital rights. The priests, who could not be ignorant of the Virgin's vow, as she was brought up in the cloisters of the house of God, under the direction of His ministers, confided her to the only son of Jacob, her kinsman in the second degree, rather as to a guardian, than to a partner of her couch. Some theologians have thought that Mary obeyed the counsel of the priests, enlightened by a clear revelation, whereby the Almighty showed her that the spouse whom the adorable Providence of heaven had selected would freely renounce his right, and that she would be secure in her virginal purity, resting her destiny on the care of the loving designs of the most august Trinity. That Mary and Joseph contracted their alliance on the condition of observing perpetual chastity is taught by the gravest theologians, cited by the venerable Peter Canisius.* Be this as it may, we proceed to consider that the ministers of the sanctuary in their council, did nothing, took no meas-

* It is indeed very probable, as theologians of eminent name have already taught, that Mary and Joseph had from the first agreed not only as to the marriage, but as to the preservation of continency in the married state, that in these most chaste spouses might be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias. (Ven. P. Canisius, *De Maria Deipara, Lib. II. cap. II.*)

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ures but what the Supreme Majesty had decreed in His counsel, as a spectacle of His adorable Providence, and decided in the law given by the ministry of Moses to the people of Israel. This was that a maiden, who was a sole heiress, should marry one of the same tribe and family, that the inheritance might not pass to other families. This too the priests decided inspired from on high.*

We remark, for an explanation of this, that although the Jews after their return from the Babylonian captivity, did not observe, as exactly as before, the separation of the families of each tribe in the ground allotted to them, and that each was free to settle where most to his advantage, or to escape a foreign rule, or other object whatever, nevertheless they were very scrupulous in maintaining the distinction and memory of their genealogies. The tribe of Juda particularly, which came back in a body, endeavored to avoid confusion with other tribes, and preserve the bounds of its ancient estates. This conduct is evinced by the edict of Cæsar Augustus, which obliged Joseph and his most holy spouse to come to Nazareth from Bethlehem, his native place, or at least the seat and centre of his family, which was the family of David and the branch of Solomon. By this scrupulous exactness wherewith they preserved in Israel the remembrance of the distinction and origin of the tribes, there was no family unable to prove its line of descent and pretension, by referring to the well-kept public records. This care, so far as concerned the tribe of Juda and house of David, was a consequence of the



* The priests on deliberating, came by divine inspiration to this opinion, to betroth the Virgin to some man who would be a proper one to guard her virginity. Only one was found most fit for this post, Joseph, of the same tribe and place, and he, according to the council of the priests, took the maiden. (Canisius, *De Maria Deipara, Lib. II. cap.* ii., citing St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio in diem Natalem Domini.*)



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continued hope on which the Jews lived of the coming of the Messias. These knew that the promised Liberator was to be born of the blood of Juda and family of David, representing that monarch as presumptive heir, and that, by his right to that inheritance, he was to ascend the throne and grasp the sceptre of Juda. This he would have received in peace, had not the revolutions of ages despoiled Juda of the possession of the crown, or rather if the Divine Dispositions had not deprived the natives of the public authority to give place to the coming of that Messias, so that on the ruins of the sceptre of Juda might rise another kingdom which was not of this world, and establish another worship worthy of the most august Majesty. In the person of the head and founder of the tribe, Jacob had centuries before announced this; that is to say, when on his death-bed he proclaimed to his son, the head of that tribe, that the Messias, who was the hope of all the nations, should appear when the sceptre of Judea had passed from the hands of the descendants of Juda. A prophecy accomplished to the letter in the reign of Herod, surnamed the Great, a foreigner, who usurped the crown of Judea by the help and forces of Rome.*

The whole plan and object of this scheme, which that chosen nation should not have overlooked, being as it was the object of a particular providence, and destined to give the world the Redeemer of the blood of its patriarchs and kings, prepared it to receive him as the Author of its liberty, and the victim of its sins: and as such it would have received him had it not, led aside by the fallacies and traditions of the scribes and Pharisees, formed in the conceit of its heart a Messias

* "Juda, thee shall thy brethren praise . . . The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of the nations." (Gen. xlix. 8. 10.)

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invested with the ancient royalty of the Jewish monarchs, and rising in arms to deliver Judea from the yoke of a foreign power; that is, a Messias of a character far different from what the Scriptures gave them any grounds for expecting: hence it was clear that the promised Liberator, by poverty and humility, would convert the house of Jacob and the sceptre of Juda to a spiritual empire of eternal duration over all the kingdoms of earth.

Finally, the family of David being in that situation of which the sacred penman speaks at the first chapter of his gospel, where he recounts its genealogy, Joseph was the eldest son of Jacob, the nearest relative of Saint Joachim's only daughter and heiress, and consequently marked out by heaven and decreed by the law to contract the alliance. Joseph was, too, for those eminent virtues, which had from his cradle signalized him among the Hebrews, entitled to a union with his cousin; and to him the priests, inspired from on high, gave her as a spouse, they having been her guardians after the death of her parents, which occurred in the eighth year after her presentation in the temple. All was overruled and governed by the counsels of the most august Trinity, as that union was to be the means whereby the Incarnation of the Eternal Word was to be accomplished beneath the veil of a public marriage, and with the precautions of the wisest Providence. All this transpired in the capital of Judea, in Jerusalem the holy city, and in that gorgeous temple, whose untold wealth represented the design of that espousal. Nor did the priesthood conceive that the resolution of the sanctuary, measured apparently by the rules of human prudence, was to decide the most fortunate, and to the nations most advantageous event since the world began, the greatest of mysteries being accomplished in it. Justly might Joseph flatter himself on this alliance which the God of Abraham had chosen

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for his beloved daughter : and although his thoughts did not reach the intentions of the heavenly court in this union with the daughter and heiress of Joachim, he probably perceived in the Virgin's features traits which presaged to him felicity and benediction. It did not however then occur to him that his espousals could be the fulfilment of the oracle of Isaias, when he announced that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, whose name should mean "God with us," and that a young man should dwell with a virgin.

To satisfy the curiosity of those who have other ideas as to the election of Saint Joseph to espousals with the Blessed Virgin, I will give the account found in some ancient books, whose authors are however unknown.* In these we read that when the daughter of Joachim and Anne entered the fourteenth year of her age, she was informed in the name of Zachary, the high priest and Pontiff of that year,† that it was time for her to retire to the house of her parents or kindred, according to the custom of Israel, and take her state of life like the other maidens of the nation. To this the Virgin replied, that her wish was to remain all her days in the precincts of the temple, where her parents had offered her to God, and that moreover she had consecrated herself to God by a vow of perpetual virginity, renouncing all hopes of marriage.

On hearing this novelty, the high priest was amazed, and unable to reply, said that the matter must be deliberated on in a higher council, and not concluded till the sovereign





* Gospel of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. (See CALMET, *Dictionary of the Bible*, verbo *Anne.*)

† SAINT AMBROSE (*Lib. I. in Lucam*), SAINT AUGUSTINE (*Homil.* 49, *in Joan*), SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM and others, think that Zachary was raised to the office of High Priest, but Calmet in his Dictionary (*verbo* Zachary), says that it is more probable that Zachary never was High Priest.

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God of Israel vouchsafed to enlighten his servant. For this purpose the ministers who were then serving in their turn in the temple assembled in the sanctuary, and asked God to enlighten them, by manifesting his designs. While this congress were in prayer on a certain great Jewish holiday, there came from the interior of the sanctuary * a voice which, resounding in the ears of the high priest, said that all the marriageable descendants of the tribe of Juda and house of David should assemble, and that he whose rod should blossom, and on which at the same time the Holy Ghost should descend and sit in the form of a dove, was the one appointed as the Virgin's spouse. Joseph, who, according to this account, was then of mature age, was one of those summoned. At first he was disinclined to show his rod ; but on placing it afterwards with the rods of the other descendants of David, it began to flower, and the Holy Ghost appearing in the form of a dove descended and rested amid the blossoms. By this prodigious mark, Joseph was declared the chosen one of heaven as future consort of Joachim's daughter and heiress: and to him the priests confided her, rather as to a guardian than to a bridegroom. This account is given in the gospel of the birth of Mary, an apocryphal work, yet so ancient that the eminent critic Calmet regards it as containing an ancient tradition of the Church.† For our part, setting aside the authority of this class of ancient documents, we confess, as Catholics, the espousals contracted between the reputed father of Jesus and the illustrious Virgin Mary, and it seems to us by no means improbable, that in the choice of her

* The Sanctuary, which was divided from the Holy of Holies by a veil, was the place where the priests assembled.

† Calmet in his Dictionary (*verbo* Presentation), speaking of the circumstance in question, calls it a tradition based on certain ancient documents, "marquée dans de tres anciens monumens." (Edition Migne, Tom. III. 1253.)

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Overbeck

Joseph sold by his brethren.

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spouse there were traits of singularity more striking and peculiar than usually occurred in the espousals of Jewish maidens. As to the event in question, we say that the blooming rod and other circumstances of the choice, are reckoned by severe critics among the many fables related in the Gospel of James and other apocryphal books mentioned in the canon of Pope Gelasius, which excludes them.* Some ancients would fain attribute these and other like books to writers of acknowledged judgment and authority: but this unjust pretension has not prevailed, these books being evidently shown to be the work of other writers, who blindly followed as a well-founded tradition the fable of some poet, or the romantic ideas of the vulgar, or some picture based on no better authority than an artist's fancy, an authority scarcely recognizable in sound criticism or good theology.† Among authors, whether Greek or Latin, we find some who have believed these mysterious circumstances of the rod in the betrothal of Saint Joseph; but they relied on the words of the Protevangelion of Saint James,‡ of which, too, they doubtless availed themselves who painted Saint Joseph with a flowering rod in his hand, to signify the marvel whereby it is vulgarly believed that the saint was selected as spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The illustrious critic Papebroke § says, that these paint-

* Canone Sancta Romana, 3. Distinct. 15.

† As for painters and poets, the common answer is, that their authority avails not so much with theologians, as to make it an honor to follow their authority. (TROMBELLI.)

‡ "Joseph however, throwing down his axe, went to meet them, and they, being assembled, proceeded to the High Priest, bearing rods." (Protevangelion of St. James.)

§ Concludo igitur, atque dico, quod virgam sæpe dictam recipit Papebrochius veluti picturam mysticam et significativam candoris virginalis, qui unquam maculatus est; sed magis proficiens quotidie floruit semper in animo Josephi.

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ings are no proof of the reality of the story, but a mystic or symbolic picture whereby they wished to signify the virginal purity of the most holy spouse Mary; and he adds that this method of painting deceived those who took that symbol of virginity as the representation of a real occurrence; and for this reason he is painted with the rod only, without the dove, which is not deemed so apt for representing the purity which daily flowered more and more in the heart of Saint Joseph. Nevertheless in the explanation of this symbol, writers differ greatly. Father Barri * says that the flowering rod painted in the hand of the spouse of the Mother of God is a figure or symbol of the most pure heart of Mary, offered as a most magnificent gift to her most amiable spouse. An eminent Mexican scholar,† whose modesty has prevented his eloquent pen from adding to our published works, explains in the following solid and ingenious manner the blossoming rod painted in the hands of Mary's pure spouse. This rod, he says, is that of which Isaias spoke in the prophecy which we read in the eleventh chapter of that seer: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse;" and that it represents the mother of Jesus and true spouse of Saint Joseph, who holds it in his hand to signify that the Blessed Virgin, symbolized in the rod of the prophet, was by their espousals to pass to his hand, that is, under the power and authority which, from the first, the law of God gave to the husband.‡ The same prophecy would explain too the introduction of the dove, the symbol of the Holy Ghost, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him;" and an ancient

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Quod que ex hoc modo loquendi et pingendi data est occasio locutionem figuratam pro re facta accipiendi. (*Acta Bollandiana vindicata*, p. 698.)

* Barri, *De Sancto Josepho, cap.* i.

† Don Jose Rafael Campoi.

‡ "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power." (Gen. iii. 16.)

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painting might thus easily have given rise to the account in the apocryphal gospel.

The motives which influenced the Almighty in preferring Saint Joseph in this dominion and power over his most holy Mother by the form of espousals, are not written in the holy gospels, nor declared in the constant traditions of the Church; to pretend to fathom them, would, be therefore, to seek to divine in the Almighty that supreme direction of his decrees which he has not chosen to reveal to mortals. Nor should we do more than commit ourselves to the will of that Father of infinite wisdom, who willed to select him as the guardian of his only begotten Son, made man, and as the faithful protector of his most pure Mother. If the motives which in their forecast legislators less wise than God have, are often so profound that subjects cannot penetrate them,* who will comprehend the reasons which Heaven had for excluding all others, and choosing Saint Joseph as spouse of the Virgin Mary? Nevertheless, as Saint Leo the Great tells us that God in his decrees and works consults not only his Divine Omnipotence, but also his Infinite Wisdom,† we may conclude that this Saint was chosen to be Mary's spouse, because he was of all men the most suited to the lofty designs of the Lord in these sacred espousals.‡ Saint Augustine assigns as a motive the necessity of Hebrew maidens marrying their nearest relative,§ according to a law estab-

* Non omnium quæ a majoribus constituta sunt, ratio reddi potest.—Reasons cannot be given for all that was ordained by our ancestors. (*Lege* xx. ff. *de Legibus.*)

† Saint Leo, *Sermo II. III. De Nativitate.*

‡ See Canisius, *De Maria Deipara, Lib. II. cap.* ii.

§ "Neque enim cum vidisset jam Virginem sacram divina fœcunditate donatam, ipse aliam quæreret uxorem cum utique neque illam quæsisset, si necessariam conjugem non haberet."—"Nor did Joseph seek another wife when he saw the Virgin endowed with Divine fecundity, as he would not have sought her, had not

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lished * with a view of preventing estates from passing to other families. Others † think that the law observed by the Jews was not the cause of this preference, but that it resulted from revelations from heaven made to the Immaculate Virgin and to Saint Joseph with regard to the marriage, but revelations which did not disclose the motives of the choice of Joseph in preference to all others. A silence which, according to Saint Augustine, should render more admirable the providence of Heaven in these espousals.‡ Some say, that from the very day when the Jewish council resolved on the union, the Blessed Virgin was confided to Saint Joseph, as her spouse, that is without awaiting the marriage ceremony. In proof of this are alleged some expressions of Saint John Chrysostom,§ saying that it was a Hebrew custom to confide the betrothed to her future husband, as a guardian, till the day of the matrimonial contract. This opinion however lacks solid founda-

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the law required it." (SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Contra Julianum Pelagianum, Lib. V. cap.* 12, § 48.)

* "All the women shall take husbands of the same tribe." (Numbers xxxvi. 8.)

† "Fuit sententia antiquorum Patrum, Beatam Virginem ex divina revelatione contraxisse matrimonium . . . Ex eadem autem revelatione intellexit Beata Virgo suum sponsum libenter in perpetuam virginitatem fuisse consensurum"—"It was the opinion of the ancient Fathers that the Blessed Virgin contracted marriage in obedience to a divine revelation . . . and that by the same revelation she understood that her spouse would freely consent to her perpetual virginity." (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. Pt. III. Dist.* 7. § 2.) In fine "I will only add that I consider as far from improbable the opinion of many worthy men, who add to this some revelation or Angelical apparition, by which Joseph learned that heaven destined him in marriage the Blessed Virgin." (TROMBELLI, *Vita de San Giuseppe, cap.* xx. *num.* 29.)

‡ "Si ratio quæritur, non erit mirabile, si exemplum poscitur non erit singulare."—"If a reason is sought, it will not be wonderful; if an example is asked, it will not be unique." (SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Epist. ad Volusianum.*)

§ "Before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." (Matt i 18.) "He does not say before she was brought to the house of the bridegroom, for she was already there. It was a Jewish custom that the espoused should dwell in the house of her espoused, and it was generally done." (ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homil. IV. in Matth.*)

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tion. The expression of Saint John is not convincing, as he merely says that the Blessed Virgin was in the house of Saint Joseph before the nuptials,* that is, before the wedding and certain solemnities and ceremonies, which were usually added after the conclusion of the contract in its substance and nature,—ceremonies which were commonly deferred till the time when the bride made her public entry into her husband's house with pomp and rejoicing. Nor is it easy to believe that in so enlightened a nation, a custom obtained so unbecoming and dangerous to the honor and good name of the brides, when in no barbarous nation is such a custom known to exist. The Hebrews called espoused and spouses those who in Europe and elsewhere are called married, until certain solemnities took place, which followed the actual marriage and entrance of the wife into her husband's house.

Besides this, when Saint John Chrysostom writes that the Blessed Virgin Mary, as a spouse, was in St Joseph's house, she had already conceived the Divine Word in her womb, as is evident from the words already cited from St Matthew. Hence we infer clearly that the marriage was at least in substance already concluded : as otherwise Jesus would not have been reputed the legitimate child of Saint Joseph, nor would the Almighty have shielded effectually the good name of his Immaculate Mother. All this is confirmed by Calmet, who teaches that the Jews called spouses those whom we call married,† but without some solemnities, which are often postponed and not essential to the union. This is the same as to

* Nuptials (*Fr.* Noces. *Lat.* Nuptiæ), mean the marriage feast. (CALMET.)

† Among the Hebrews espousals were what marriage is among us. The spouse had power over his spouse as a wife. To consummate the marriage required only some formalities, and leading the betrothed to her husband's house. Faults committed against his honor were punished as adultery. (CALMET, *Dictionary of the Bible*, verbo *Mary*, Note.)

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say that in Israel the matrimonial alliance without the established solemnities was the same as what is elsewhere termed espousals, betrothals, or promises of marriage.* In this way we must understand the Holy Fathers cited by the venerable Peter Canisius,† as they, imitating the expressions of Saint John Chrysostom, Euthymius and Saint Bernard, affirm that the woman from the day of her espousals till the time of the nuptials, was under the guardianship of her spouse. We merely note that Father Canisius is of opinion that the marriage of the Blessed Virgin with Saint Joseph was contracted with the last solemnities, after her visit to Saint Elizabeth. In this delay, if the opinion is well founded, there was nothing at variance with Hebrew usages, because they often deferred for a considerable time the solemnization or publicity of the marriage, as the learned Calmet notes.‡

Another vexed question has arisen as to the age of the father of Jesus, at least among those who attempt to settle the number of his years, at the time of the marriage. Saint Epiphanius,§ Cedrenus, and Nicephorus, believe that he was

* We undoubtedly read that it was customary with the Jews, that before the lawful marriage between man and wife was entered into, the spouse was led to the house of her spouse, and there awaited the time of the wedding, as Chrysostom notes. Hence Anselm also writes: "Espousals took place some time before assiduous cohabitation, and in the meanwhile the wife was under the care of her husband, and received frequent visits from him till the wedding was solemnly celebrated. Some also, and Gerson is of the number, think that Joseph and Mary were espoused at Jerusalem, and that they then lived together, either in Joseph's house, or in that of some relative of Mary's, before the solemn nuptials were celebrated according to the custom of the nation. (CANISIUS, Lib. II. cap. 11)

† This nuptial contract took place only after saluting her cousin in Zachary's house. (CANISIUS, *Dec. Maria Deipara, Lib. II. cap.* xi.)

‡ Between the espousing and the marriage a considerable time frequently elapsed. (CALMET, *Dictionary of the Bible*, verbo *Noces*, Edition Migne III. 739.)

§ Quod in primis homo senex supra octoginta annos natus Virginem ad usum corporis non acceperit, sed divina providentia ad illam custodiendam appositus."—"A man of over eighty, he took the Virgin not for bodily union, but merely

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an octogenarian when he espoused the Virgin Mary. This opinion is derived from the Protevangelion of James and the gospel of the birth of Mary, apocryphal books, and from the first rejected as full of fables. At these corrupt fountains drank Saint Epiphanius, as well as Cedrenus, Nicephorus, and poets and painters who have blindly given as a portrait of Saint Joseph at the time when his espousals were celebrated, what, for all its fair coloring, will ever appear at variance with God's designs in the choice of a consort for His Mother. Hence the authority of Saint Epiphanius should not prevail in this question; but with all due respect to his antiquity and erudition, we lay aside * his account, with the learned and holy men who openly attack his opinion; which indeed, as Theophilus Raynaldus well observes, has hardly a single follower among the holy Fathers.† Cardinal Baronius vindicating Saint Epiphanius, says, that this father does not affirm the advanced age of Saint Joseph, but expresses his doubts on the point: ‡ Cedrenus, if we must do him justice, adds nothing by way of authority to this opinion, because this author, says Trombelli, already cited, is a man of sad criticism, in whose judgment a fable or vulgar tradition outweighs the statements of learned and solid writers. Nicephorus, who copies him, lived in an age when criticism had not reached its zenith and ultimate perfection, reserved for more enlightened times; and on the other hand

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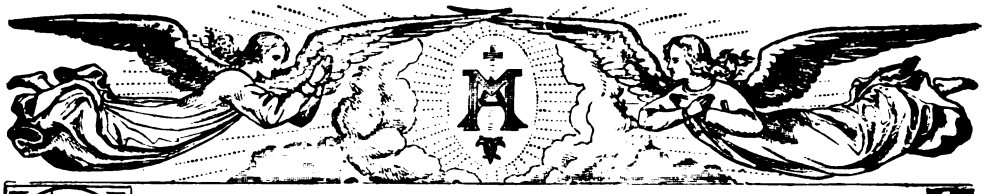
selected by Divine Providence to guard over her." (St. Epiphanius, *Hæres* 78. *num.* 8.)

* Most holy and learned men oppose Saint Epiphanius . . . so that without any want of veneration and esteem for the Saint, we may dissent from his opinion. (Trombelli, part 1. ch. 9. n. 8.)

† Scarcely any one of the Fathers adheres to Saint Epiphanius. (Raynaud, *Diptyc. Marian.* Pt. 1. pun. 4 n. 17.)

‡ Baronius, *ad ann. Christi.* 12. § 9.

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is a modern, who is admitted neither into the number of the Holy Fathers nor in the class of Catholics, and wanting antiquity, says Raynaldus, wants also authority.* Ancient painters need not be attacked, and did they deserve to be, it were enough to quote the lines of Horace† and the judgment of Hyacinth Serry, who styles them bold in their conceptions.‡ The poets who sing of the decrepit age of Saint Joseph, drew this old age from the same source that Saint Epiphanius did,§ who visibly lacking critical acumen, confirmed the sentence of Justinian "to bear all things in mind, and fall into no carelessness of pen, is rather divine than human." ‖

Cæsar Calino,¶ a man of vast erudition, shows himself more humane to the painters than Serry does. They were deceived, says Calino, by the long beard given to Saint Joseph in old paintings. The Jews of that day let the beard grow, considering it an ornament and a glory of the nation. To keep up this custom in the pictures, the first artists painted Saint Joseph with such a beard as to give him the look of a

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* NICEPHORUS, who (1. *Hist. cap.* 7.), represents Saint Joseph as an old man at the time of the marriage, is counted neither among the Fathers nor Catholic writers, and the authority of hoary antiquity he entirely lacks. (RAYNAUD.)

† Pictoribus atque Poetis,
Quod libet audendi, semper fuit æqua potestas.
Ars Poetica.

‡ Pictores audax hominum genus. (SERRI, *Excercitatio*, 25. num. 1.)

§ Epiphanius also, says Sandinus (*de S. Josepho* 5), and Gregory of Nyssa, in his sermon on the birth of Christ, seem to have drawn from these impure fountains

‖ *Lege* 2. *C. De veteri jure enucleando.*

¶ The Jews wore long beards. The ancients who wished to portray the Saint to the life, did not deprive him of what was then deemed an ornament of the face; the more moderns drew him old, because in the more ancient paintings they found him bearded. (CALINO, *Trat. Istoric sopra il Santo Vangelo, Tom. IV. Lib. II. cap.* 4.)



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man of eighty: hence less ancient painters represented the Saint as old, with no better reason than the beard by which antiquity depicted him a Jew. Others on the other hand exculpate the painters, attributing the error to piety, which to gain the Patriarch greater veneration among the faithful, depicted Saint Joseph as a venerable old man, giving his hand as a spouse to a girl of fourteen. Let us then pass over this conduct of the painters; their idea is ill suited to represent the spouse whom God in his adorable Providence selected as the guardian and solace of his Mother. Joseph was given as a spouse to Mary, as Saint Jerome teaches us,* to be a support to her in her flight to Egypt. And what consolation could a Virgin, reared in the temple, find in a man whose many years were an infirmity as troublesome as it was incurable? Some say that these paintings are not without some foundation, believing that Saint Joseph's death, which as they pretend occurred soon after the entrance of Jesus on his thirteenth year, could result only from his advanced age.

This point we shall treat in its place in our history: now I merely answer, that death is no proof of advanced years, as we see that youth and old age hasten with equal steps to the grave. And so Saint Joseph might well have died when Christ was thirteen.

Gerson does not reprove the paintings: but adds that the object of the painters was not to represent the advanced age of the Saint,† but to give the world a distinct idea of his vir-

* "De desponsata concipitur ut in Ægyptum fugiens haberet solatium."—"He was conceived of one espoused, that she might have a solace in her flight to Egypt." (St. Jerome, *Comment. in Matt. cap.* 1.)

† He is sometimes painted as an old man on account of his chastity of mind and body, as the Wise Man says "A spotless life is old age" (Wisd. iv. 9), or he was painted as an old man in the origin of the Church, when Mary's perpetual virginity had not as now become deeply rooted in the hearts of the faithful, that

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tues, or to banish from the faithful all suspicion of Our Lady's perpetual virginity, which was not in those days as well established, as in the later ages of the Church.

The German artists, either as being more versed in criticism, or drawing from the treasury of more pleasing fancy, do not follow the ancient painters in depicting Saint Joseph, but paint the holy Patriarch as of an almost boyish age, as Gerson affirms, telling us that he had seen the paintings.*

"In order to believe that Mary's most holy spouse was not as old as he is painted, when he celebrated his nuptials with the Blessed Virgin, we need not," says the Abate Trombelli, "recur to German paintings: as it is certain that in many ancient pictures Saint Joseph is represented as of an age corresponding to his destiny, and proportioned to the journey and hardships of his holy ministry. This is told us by the historians who mention these ancient documents preserved in distant parts. From their distance from us we cannot examine them, but we are freed from the necessity of examining them by the fact that we have in our own library, among our liturgical works, a most beautiful manuscript, illuminated with letters of gold and most beautiful miniatures, in which both before the calendar (which is for the early part of the thirteenth century) as after it, are most beautifully painted, in the style of that age, various passages in the

nothing carnal should be suspected of Joseph and Mary. Hence too perhaps all solemnization of that happy and venerable marriage is omitted in the feasts of the Church. (GERSON, *Sermon on the Nativity of the B. V. M. Consid.* 3)

* "Yet we find him painted as a young man, such as we have shown him to have been, as I have frequently seen in Germany. (GERSON, *ubi supra.*) "Perhaps," says the Venerable Peter Canisius, "cautious antiquity gave this to popular simplicity, that even if Joseph were younger than he is painted, yet that he might be held as old to avoid all suspicion of love and conjugal union. (*De Maria Deipara, Lib. II. cap.* 13.)

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life of our Saviour and some of the Saints. Among the rest is a little miniature of Saint Joseph, which represents him as of a whitish complexion, unwrinkled, with a short beard, and as of about the age of forty: the other circumstances of this miniature, which is the fourth after the calendar, refer to the birth of the Infant God, whom Saint Joseph is contemplating, rapt in admiration.

In another of the miniatures, the ninth, Saint Joseph appears in the flight into Egypt, guiding our Lady, who is riding on an ass, with the Infant Jesus in her arms. The travellers are followed by a bareheaded young man, who bears over his left shoulder a pole, with a cloth radiating from the top like an umbrella. In this miniature Saint Joseph is painted as of tall stature and of middle age; that is, a man of forty." *

These miniatures correspond to some seen in Venice by a learned Mexican, who sent me the following account, worthy of credit from the exactness with which he observed the precious monuments of antiquity. "I saw in Venice, in the library of the Armenian monks, a manuscript Bible of the form and style of the nation, in which, among other curious illuminations, apparently of the fourth century, as the librarian thinks, is a picture of Saint Joseph, representing him as a young man.†

In view of such decisive proofs, we cannot but maintain what the learned Trombelli asserts in these words: "Some have said, following Saint Epiphanius, that Saint Joseph was of decrepit age when he espoused the Virgin; but I know that other most learned men have reasoned far differently. There is Gerson, regarded as the first theologian of his time,

* Trombelli, Life of St. Joseph, Part. I. ch. ix. n. 13.

† Don Agustin Castro, of Cordova.

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who makes no doubt but that the prophecy of Isaias, "A young man shall dwell with a virgin," is to be understood of Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, according to the interlinear gloss and the ordinary one which in this place say: "Joseph shall dwell with Mary." Gerson is followed by Cardinal Viguier, a most famous theologian in the time of Julius II.,* and also by all critics. Theophilus Rainaud,† an able theologian and bold critic, declares himself in favor of those who make Saint Joseph in the prime of life when he married the Virgin, and this opinion has been embraced by many ancient and famous divines, whose names I omit, being enough for me to cite a Baronius,‡ a Suarez,§ a Vasquez,‖ a Sandino,¶ a Salianus, a Cardinal Toledo,** and among Protestants, a Montague,†† whose authority in the discussion of this question, must be held in high regard; for this heterodox writer, for all that he is so avowed an enemy of Cardinal Baronius as to despise all his opinions and attack them with every art of his pen, nevertheless, on coming to the opinion of the youth or manhood of Saint Joseph, says the same as Baronius." ‡‡

Capizucus,§§ an ancient author, considers this the most probable opinion; and every one must say the same after

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* VIQUIER, *De Conjugii Mariæ excellentia, Lib. I. cap.* 13.

† RAINAUD, *Dyptica Mariana, pat.* 1. *punc.* 4. *numb.* 16.

‡ BARONIUS, *Ann.* 12. *Christi*, § 9.

§ SUAREZ, *Tom. II. in* 3 *Part. Disp.* 7. § 3.

‖ VAZQUEZ, *in Part* 3. *disp.* 125. *cap.* xi. *num.* 127.

¶ SANDINO, *De Sancti Josepho*, 4.

** TOLEDO and SALDANO, cited by Montague.

†† MONTAGUE, *Appar.* 9. *num.* 26. *p.* 125.

‡‡ TROMBELLI, *Part.* 1. *c.* 8. *numb.* 4.

§§ It is more probable that Saint Joseph when he married the Blessed Virgin, was neither young nor very old, but of mature age. (CAPIZUCUS, *Controv.* theologiæ selectæ." (p. 393 ed. 1667.)

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reading attentively the following argument, set forth by the incomparable Doctor, Francis Suarez. "Joseph was not, as Saint Epiphanius has said, of an advanced age when he married the Blessed Virgin, for four reasons; which are, 1st. Because it was proper that there should be in that marriage the relative proportion of age usually observed: 2d. Because it was also proper that Joseph should be of an age suited for progeny, otherwise he would not save intact the name and honor of the Mother of God: 3d. Because Joseph needed to be a robust man to undertake the journey to Egypt, and support the family by the labor of his hands: 4th. Because Holy Scripture in a manner declares his manly age, since in the first chapter of St Luke we read that the Blessed Virgin was espoused to a man (viro), not to an old man. Hence Isaias, speaking of the coming of Christ, says: "A young man shall dwell with a virgin," a prophecy applied by Lyra and the ordinary gloss to this mystery. It seems certain, then, that Joseph was not an octogenarian, and it is most probable that he was not old. Whether he was thirty or forty, we cannot precisely say, nor can we affirm whether he was young, or of the prime of life, as historians do not tell us." *

The comparatively youthful age of Saint Joseph at the time of his espousal with the Blessed Virgin is rendered more probable from the custom of the Jews, which, as Calmet

* Primo quia decuit, ut in matrimonio illo servaretur ea proportio inter virum et uxorem, quæ communi usu et consuetudine servari solet . . . Quarto enim Scriptura non nihil favet: nam Lucæ. 1 dicitur: *Angelus missus ad virginem desponsatam viro;* non seni . . . Unde Isaiæ 62. 5. de tempore adventus Messiæ dicitur; *Habitabit juvenis cum virgine*, quod non incommode ad hoc mysterium applicant Glossa ordinaria et Nicolaus Lyra. Certum ergo videtur, Joseph non fuisse octogenarium; qua vero ætate fuerit, juvenisne an vir, triginta, quadragintave annorum, definiri non potest, cum ex historiis, nihil habeamus. (SUAREZ.)

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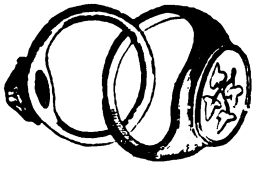
assures us, was to marry at eighteen.* And we read in the Talmud, that it was censurable in a father to marry his daughter to an old man. It is certain from the history of that people, that after their return from captivity they married later in life than before, but the delay could not have been so great as to leave such unions till old age.

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* The Hebrews married young. The Rabbis wished men to be married at eighteen . . . This question is asked in the Talmud: Who is he that prostitutes his daughter? He who keeps her too long unmarried at home, or gives her to an old man. (CALMET, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, verbo *Noces.*) The academicians of Leipsic as to the age of Saint Joseph, say that Sandino followed Saint Epiphanius. "Sandino," say they, "thinks that Joseph was eighty or more when he married Mary, according to Epiphanius. (Hæres. 78. § 8. LIPSIENSES *Nova acta eruditorum*, Anno 1737, Tom. II. Sect. 2. p. 550.)

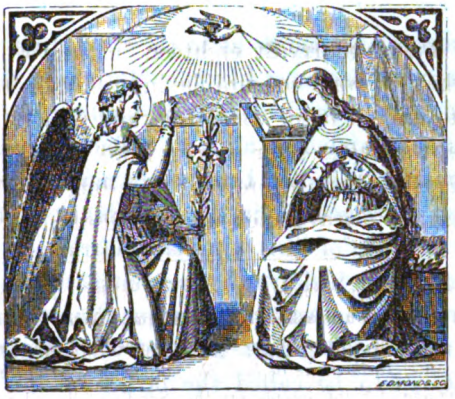
Sandino openly defends the contrary opinion. Let us give his words: "Baronius (12 A. C.) follows not Epiphanius, but those who think Joseph to have been then of mature age. Nor unwisely. First because it was proper as Suarez shows that in that marriage, &c." This shows the inexactitude of these literati in the examination of foreign works; the error is so clear that there is no escape or excuse, but the line of Horace—

Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus.





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CHAPTER IV.

LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH FROM HIS MARRIAGE WITH THE BLESSED VIRGIN, TILL HIS JOURNEY WITH HER TO HEBRON, TO THE HOUSE OF ELIZABETH.

THE perpetual virginity of Saint Joseph is a point so clear and well substantiated in the immaculate life of Mary's spouse, that even Protestants, not usually reckoned among the partisans of virginal purity, but convinced by the arguments and authorities adduced by Catholics, openly confess that St. Joseph bore to the tomb that aroma of virginity with which he came into the world.* Saint Jerome, a doctor of the Church, who for learning and erudition in ancient monuments outweighs a host of writers,

* Certe . . . quomodo non homini virgini Deus virginem . . . tradidisset, &c.? Quibus illud addo, viduum nequaquam accepturum fuisse Mariam in uxorem; neque enim par, aut conveniens erat, ut ætate jam provectior, et sex liberorum pater juvenculam annorum vix quindecim in uxorem duceret; *Pari enim jugo ducis tractatus.* (MONTAGUE, Apparatus, 9. n. 29.)

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wrote powerful arguments as to the perpetual integrity of that spouse, who was most like the Mother of God in purity of soul and body. In this beautiful apology, he thus speaks against the heresiarch Helvidius: "Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a Virgin: I not only maintain it, but aver that Joseph too was a virgin through Mary, so that a virgin son might be born of this virginal marriage. It does not appear that Joseph had ever before contracted marriage. Of the mother of God he was rather a guardian than a husband, hence we must believe that he lived with Mary as a virgin, and so deserved to be called the father of the Lord. The authors of some apocryphal and justly rejected works have said the contrary, affirming that Joseph before his union with Mary, had another wife named Melca or Esca, and that of this wedlock issued Saint James the less, bishop of Jerusalem, and two other children; but this story is a mere fable, and those who believe it are men who have lost all judgment and deserve to be set down as madmen. We read in the gospel that Saint James the less, Saint Joseph and Saint Jude or Thaddeus are called brethren of Jesus; but who does not know that in Scripture cousins are styled brethren?" *

In an ancient Greek Breviary also, mention is made of the virginity of the spouse of the Virgin Mary; and not unworthy of belief is this fact given by the Bollandists, critics of the highest rank, and cited as to this point by the erudite Tillemont.† But conceding that these Breviaries do not

* Tu dicis Mariam virginem non permansisse; ego mihi plus vindico, etiam ipsum Joseph virginem fuisse per Mariam, ut ex virginali conjugio virgo filius nasceretur. (St. Jerome, *Adv. Helvidium, num.* 19.) Quidam fratres Domini de alia uxore Josephi suspicantur, sequentes deliramenta apocryphorum. (St. Jerome, Comment. in Matt xii. 49.)

Fratres autem consobrinos dici omnis Scriptura demonstrat. Idem.

† Bollandus believes that he can discover the virginity of Saint Joseph in the Greek office. (Tillemont, I. 480)

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declare with all precision this prerogative of Saint Joseph, are all authorities wanting? We do not lack proof of this excellency: as Saint Augustine clearly confesses it, or at least the author of the Sermon on the birth of Christ formerly ascribed to Saint Augustine, and still attributed to him by many men of learning, who, in spite of the Doctors of Louvain and the monks of St Maur, maintain that this work is not inferior in style to Saint Augustine, and contains no thoughts unworthy of that enlightened Doctor.* The author of this sermon says, that an angel appearing to Saint Joseph thus addressed him: "Mary thy spouse shall be mother of the Christ, preserving her virginal integrity of body: and thou shalt be esteemed father of the Christ, for thy care for purity and the splendor of virginity. Thou shalt live apart from the couch of thy spouse, and yet thou shalt be called father of the Saviour."

The most learned John Gerson preaching before the Council of Constance, said that it was becoming that the Mother of God and her spouse Joseph should abide for ever in virginity.† Daniel Papebroke, the continuator of the work of Bollandus, does not hesitate to affirm, that since Saint Jerome, the whole Latin Church is unanimously of

* It will suffice to refer to Saint Augustine (*Sermo de Nativitate*), cited by Saint Thomas in the Catena Aurea, on Matt. xiii. 55, for although it is no longer to be found among his works in the late copious editions, it must not be considered as rejected, for its style is that of the Saint, and there is nothing in it not most worthy of the holy Doctor. (TROMBELLI, Part. I. cap. xxxiv. Lit. d.)

† "Sicut decuit Mariam, ut summa puritate niteret, sic decuit ut haberet sponsum piissimum, qui cum perpetua virginitate prius ac posterius permaneret."—"As it became Mary to shine forth with the greatest purity, so was it becoming for her to have a most pious spouse, who would remain before and after in perpetual virginity." (GERSON, *Conc. de Nativ. Mariæ Tom. III. Consider III.*) Tillemont follows Gerson: "It is highly probable that the Sovereign Purity, which chose to be born of a Virgin Mother, would also give her a virgin spouse. (*Note* 3, p. 480.)

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opinion that Saint Joseph died a virgin, and that he had confirmed this virginity by vow during his whole life, a fact which renders credible his constant celibacy for so many years.*

The eminent Baronius says the same, employing the following magnificent expressions with which he adorns his pages: "All the Catholic writers of the Latin Church, who have flourished since Saint Jerome, have followed his opinion as to the perpetual virginity of Saint Joseph; so much so that Peter Damian, the noblest writer of his day, says with great satisfaction that the faith of the Church is that Saint Joseph was a virgin like his most pure spouse,† (meaning by faith, as the accurate Suarez explains, the pious belief of the Church.‡) And surely, so far as we are allowed to have recourse to probable conjectures, who will believe that God would not select a virgin spouse for his Mother, when, after he became man and was dying on the cross, he confided her to one who was a virgin? §

Canisius speaks in the same sense. His words are: ‖ "Bede and Alcuin clearly confess the perpetual virginity of

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* Virginem sane vixisse Josephum, ac mortuum esse, post Hieronymum tota Latinorum sensit ecclesia . . . proposito voti religione firmato. (PAPEBROKE, Ad diem 19 Martii, § 7, num 44.)

† Numquid ignoras Dei filium adeo carnis elegisse munditiam, ut ne quidem pudicitia conjugali, sed de clausula incarnatus sit virginali. Et ne hoc sufficere videatur et tantummodo Virgo sit Mater, Ecclesiæ fides est, ut Virgo fuerit et is, qui simulatus est Pater. (PETRUS DAMIANUS, *Opusc.* 17, *De Celibat. Sacerdotum.*)

‡ SUAREZ, Tom. II. Part. III. Disp. 5, Sect. 4.

§ Certe quidem quantum probabilibus conjecturis agere licet, quomodo non homini Virgini Deus Virginem ex que carnem susceperus erat, tradidisset, si factus homo, ex hoc mundo migraturus ad Patrem, eandem jam senescentem non nisi Virgini commendavit. (CARDINAL BARONIUS, Apparatus ad Annales Eccl. § 61.) The Benedictines of St. Maur put the sermon of St. Augustine in the Appendix (c. xcv.) with the title "*De Annunciatione Dominica*," but in the edition of the Louvain doctors it is called "*De Nativitate Domini.*"

‖ CANISIUS, Book II. ch. xiii.

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Saint Joseph, when they write in this way: without any scruple it becomes us to know and affirm, not only that the Mother of God, but that Saint Joseph also, the most faithful witness and guardian of her chastity, never used the right which marriage gives spouses. Of this same opinion was Hugh Victorinus, called in his time a second Saint Augustine, and other theologians, especially Saint Thomas and Gerson, not to mention moderns, who with solid authorities maintain that Joseph and Mary, by mutual consent, consecrated themselves to God by a vow of perpetual virginity; the spirit of God thus disposing all, so that in this great mystery, which contained the salvation of the world, the Mother of God might have a spouse, who, resembling her in his whole life, might resemble her in purity. I will say in the very words of Gerson: Mary made a vow of virginity and so did Joseph, as Holy Doctors think. Marriage was no obstacle to this vow, as it had its fruit, fidelity and sacrament, that is of the old law. St. Peter Damian, an enlightened theologian, warmly maintains that the faith of the Church (that is the opinion to which the church inclines) is, that not only the Mother of God, but Joseph also his reputed father was a virgin.

Pure then must have been the life led by this most holy pair, each endeavoring, by imitating the other, to advance in virtue and the love of God. A few months later the Divine Word was conceived in the pure womb of the Blessed Virgin. This event more properly belongs to the Life of the Blessed Virgin, and we shall accordingly not dwell upon it. As all know, the Angel Gabriel, already the messenger of the Almighty to Zachary, appeared to Our Blessed Lady, and addressed her in those words which all who profess to be Christians delight to utter: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women." Accustomed as Mary was to angel visits, these expressions of honor trou-



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bled her; but St. Gabriel reassured her, saying: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David, his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end." Unelated by the grandeur thus promised her, by the promise of the maternity of the Eternal King, Mary thought only of the virginity which she had consecrated to God, and of which St. Joseph was the holy guardian. But St. Gabriel explained it, saying: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God."

Humbling herself in conformity to the Divine Will, Mary exclaimed: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." "AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US."

Soon after this wonderful event, and apparently on the very day of the Incarnation,* Our Lady set out in haste from Nazareth for the hilly country of Juda, to visit her cousin Saint Elizabeth, who dwelt in the town of Hebron. The road, even for one in whom there were none of the circumstances in which the Blessed Virgin then was, was rough, long, and in

* Statim enim post filii conceptionem, eadem fortasse die (ut Evangelista Lucas i. 37, 38. innuit), comite Sancto Josepho, (ut decentius ac verosimilius ab omnibus judicatum est) in montana perrexit. (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. Part* 3. *Disp.* 13, in principe.)

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many parts desert, the site of Hebron being, according to the best maps, about a hundred miles distant from Nazareth, we cannot then but believe that Saint Joseph, selected by heaven to serve the Mother of God, accompanied his most holy spouse. Saint Luke does not set forth all the circumstances of this journey, nor mention Saint Joseph, it being the style of the sacred historians to omit what is naturally inseparable from the event they describe. Some * on the authority of a certain revelation, say that this journey, which must have taken six days, was made by the Virgin in a few hours, being borne to Hebron by angels; but the sacred narrative, which speaks authentically with the whole Church, only tells us, that Mary went in haste to the hilly country of Juda.† As soon as the holy travellers reached their journey's end, the Blessed Virgin entered to salute Saint Elizabeth: and her spouse Joseph, according to the ceremonies and customs of the nation, proceeded to pay his respects to Zachary. From the traditions of that age we cannot discover whether Saint Joseph was present at all that was said between his spouse and Saint Elizabeth. Isidore Isolanus ‡ believes that the holy Patriarch was admitted to the sacred conversation of those two great souls, filled with the Holy Ghost; but that he did not understand the meaning of those wonderful sentiments; hence his pen describes him as a soul in ecstasy, and

* The asserters of this revelation are cited by Salmeron, Lib. III. tract. 10.

† Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste. (Luke i. 39.)

‡ When Joseph heard the voice of Elizabeth saying, *Whence is this to me, that the Mother of the Lord should come to me*, may we not believe him to have been filled with new joys? Hence he was greatly astounded at his cousin's words. In his admiration, however, his mind was called to contemplate the highest mysteries by hearing the voice of his Virgin spouse beginning: *My soul doth magnify the Lord.* And although he did not fully comprehend them, he doubtless received with Zachary a great consolation. (ISOLANUS, *De donis S. Josephi*, Pt. 2. cap. 6.)

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overawed to hear mysteries so profound that the understanding cannot fathom them. John Gerson * believing more than Isidore Isolanus, says that Saint Joseph not only heard the canticles which declared the Incarnation of the Divine Word, but that moreover, on setting out on this mountain-journey, he learned from the lips of his spouse herself, that the hidden mystery, expected for so many centuries, had already begun. Theologians and critics abandon Gerson's opinion to follow Isolanus, as the more probable: that is, that Saint Joseph heard the words of Saint Elizabeth and the canticle of his spouse, but did not fathom the mystery which they contained; in the same manner that the Apostles in later days, listening to Our Lord speak with the utmost clearness of his Passion, did not understand any thing.† This, according to the gentler critics, is all that we can admit; but the severer ones do not credit Isolanus, but, on the contrary, maintain that it is more probable that Saint Joseph, according to the ancient oriental style, would not enter with the Blessed Virgin into the room or hall where Saint Elizabeth received her; because, they say, that among the orientals, it was not cus-

* "Decantavit canticum Maria, cecinit et ipse Zacharias; non dubium, quin particeps et conscius canticorum istorum Joseph extiterit."—"Mary sang her canticle, Zachary too chanted; there is no doubt but that Joseph heard and joined in these canticles." (GERSON, *Sermo de Nativitate Mariæ Consid* 3.) "Novit Maria Mysterium Incarnationis a sæculis absconditum, novit et Joseph, admonitus super hæc in somnis, ut existimo, prius edoctus familiariter a Maria."—"Mary knew the mystery of the Incarnation, hidden for ages; Joseph knew it too, admonished in dreams, and as I think previous familiarly made aware of it by Mary." (GERSON, *Sermo de S. Josepho in Concilio Constantiæ*, Tom. III. p. 1352.)

† Then Jesus said to them; Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things. (Luke xviii. 31, 32.)

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tomary for men, unless very near relatives, to enter the room in which women received their visits.* Although these customs, which were properly Grecian, prevailed among the Jews, nevertheless it is doubtful whether they would exclude one so nearly related as Saint Joseph.

The Blessed Virgin † remained in Zachary's house about three months, but as to her spouse, it does not appear whether he accompanied her, or whether, returning to his house in Nazareth, he remained there till it was time for his spouse to leave Hebron in order to return home. The Abate Trombelli ‡ believes that Saint Joseph remained for three months at the house of Zachary; because the holy Patriarch was not so poor, but that he could leave his village for a time: more especially as he must have stayed at the house of Zachary, a priest equally rich and noble, and in a kingdom where liberality and munificence needed rather a bridle than a spur.

At the end of the three months, which the Blessed Virgin had proposed to remain with Saint Elizabeth, she returned home with her spouse to her cottage in Nazareth. The gospel merely says that she returned to her house in Nazareth, leaving some circumstances, which it does not state, to be understood: and on the other hand, it would be superfluous to relate exactly what is usually done in such cases.§ For want of more light on the subject we cannot give other facts of this journey. Some believe that the Mother of God went

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* See CORNELIUS NEPOS, Preface.

† And Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house. (Luke i. 56.)

‡ TROMBELLI, Pt. 1. cap. 18. num. 16.

§ When the Sacred Text does not say with whom the Blessed Virgin went, we must understand that she went with him, with whom she should naturally go, that is, with her husband. (CALINO, Tom. IV. Lib. II. c. 8.)

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to the mountains and returned on a beast of burden, the conveyance which nature gave the Jews. This is a conjecture, and to give it as certain would be to give guesswork for history, and say that what merely might have happened really took place.





CHAPTER V.

ST. JOSEPH'S ANXIETY AS TO MARY'S CONDITION—HIS RESOLUTION OF LEAVING HER—WHETHER HE LEARNED THE INCARNATION OF THE MESSIAS FROM HER—THE ANGEL APPEARS—HIS LIFE WITH MARY.

IN this world joy gives place to sorrow, as storm and calm to the ocean, and at times our very tranquillity is dashed with bitterness,* and tribulations gush from the very fountains of consolation; so that mortals seem raised to the pinnacle of happiness that their downfall may be more terrible and their agony more striking. This is what history sets before our eyes in the mirror of dark events: this is what we behold, even in those happy souls whom God has placed upon earth as a rare spectacle of his adorable Providence, when he wishes to try the purity of virtue.

* Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter. (Isaias xxxviii. 17.)

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Without recurring to other examples, we shall find in the heart of Saint Joseph this conduct of heaven displayed with traits worthy of the eloquence of a Chrysostom. "God," says this Father, "in his boundless benignity, mingles with our toils the torrent of his sweetness even in the just, in whom he allows neither joy nor grief to be permanent, but with admirable variety makes up the lives of his Saints of prosperity and adversity, as we see he did with Saint Joseph," * who, at the moment when he was most calm and joyful in the amiable society of the Virgin, suddenly beheld prosperity transformed into tribulation, and his quiet into mortal anxiety at the new condition of his spouse, who betrayed unmistakable signs of having conceived fruit in her womb. This unexpected sight wounded Joseph's heart, not in his sense of honor, as some say, but in the predominant virtue of his humble heart; for he was convinced that it was easier for Mary to conceive without man's concurrence, than for her to have been disloyal.† And what does he do at the sight of so prodigious an event? He is filled with surprise and wonder, says Saint Jerome; ‡ yet he does not utter a single word; but, convinced of the purity of his Immaculate

* Enimvero benignus Deus laboribus dulcia miscuit; id quod etiam in sanctis omnibus observat; neque pericula neque quietem continuam præstat; sed his et illis permixtim positis, vitam justorum ordinat. Ut quod etiam hic fecit, ita perpendas velim. (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 4, *in Matthæum.*)

† Possibilius credidit, mulierem sine viro posse concipere, quam Mariam posse peccare. (*Author of the Imperfect work on Matthew.*)

‡ "Non ab alio inventa est, nisi a Joseph, qui pene licentia maritali futuræ uxoris omnia noverat . . . Sed hoc testimonium Mariæ est, quod Joseph sciens illius castitatem, et admirans quod evenerat, celat silentio cujus mysterium nesciebat."—"She was found not by another, but by Joseph, who by almost marital license knew all concerning his future wife . . . but this is Mary's testimony, that Joseph knowing her chastity, and wondering at what had happened, concealed in silence the mystery he knew not." (St. Jerome, *Comment. in Matt. Lib. II.*)

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spouse, he leaves the mystery in silence, having already had some preceding light from the confidence and liberty due him as a spouse, although he had not perfectly understood all the circumstances. By the writings and traditions of his nation Joseph knew that the future Liberator of the human race was to be born of a Virgin; and on the other hand, he was not ignorant that Heaven, already hastening the time of his mercies, was now about to fulfil the promises he had made the world; but not conceiving or understanding the mode in which this was to be accomplished, he was troubled at the presence of this mystery which he already believed; both because the circumstances of the fulfilment came upon him as new, and because great and distant things seem greater when executed before our eyes. Hence Joseph conceived by his very eyesight a new respect for this Virgin spouse, seeing that she was in reality Mother of God, when he had merely supposed her destined to be so, and with the respect came a feeling of disquiet, and confusion, which forced him to consider within himself in this way, or something like it: "What am I thinking of, that I do not withdraw from her who is now Mother of God? To leave so loved a treasure is most painful and afflicting; but as I am unworthy to be in her society, and incapable of serving her according to her dignity, I will withdraw from this Lady without her knowing that I leave her. If I absent myself publicly, giving men my reasons for the step, this miracle of sanctity will be made infamous; for as they are an unbelieving race, instead of adoring the fulfilment and truth of the sacred prophecies, they will ridicule my credulity, and Mary's honor will be obscured." Such, says Saint Bernard, is the opinion of the Holy Fathers. Why, asks the Saint, did Joseph wish to leave her? Hearken not to my opinion, but to that of the Holy Fathers. Joseph wished to depart from her for the

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same reason that Peter kept off Our Lord from him, saying: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinner"—for the same reason that the Centurion kept him from his house when he said: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter my roof." But why privately, and not openly? Lest the cause of the divorce should be asked. For what answer would that just man make to that stiff-necked people, to that unbelieving and contradicting people? If he should say what he knew to be true, that he had every proof of her purity, would not the incredulous Jews ridicule him, and stone her?" * And who can fail to see that the Jews, who would not believe the Son when speaking in the temple, would still less credit his silence, when he was enclosed in his mother's womb? The Blessed Virgin confirmed the opinion of Saint Bernard by a revelation made to her client Saint Bridget.† "Joseph,"

* "Quare voluit dimittere eam? Accipe. et in hoc non meam sed Patrum sententiam: propter hoc Joseph voluit dimittere eam, propter quod et Petrus Dominum a se repellebat dicens: *Exi a me Domine quia homo peccator sum;* propter quod et Centurio a domo sua eum prohibebat, cum diceret; *Domine non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum.* Sed quare occulte et non palam? Ne videlicet divortii causa inquireretur. Quod enim vir justus responderet populo duræ cervicis, populo non credenti et contradicenti? Si diceret quod sentiebat, quod de illius puritate comprobaverat, nonne mox increduli Judæi subsannarent illum, lapidarent illam?" (St. Bernard, *Hom. II. super Missus est num.* 14.)

The Venerable Father Canisius, in his dissertations on the Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary (Bk. II. ch. 13), cites Origen (Hom. I. in *diversis*), and many other ancients in favor of St. Bernard's opinion. "Compare," says Origen, "compare Joseph to Elizabeth the mother of John, who admiring Mary's dignity, when she beheld her, said with great veneration; *Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke i. 43;) so too Joseph, justly humbling himself in all things, was full of care, and feared to offer himself as a companion to so high a sanctity. Therefore he resolved to leave her privately." Bernard evidently follows Origen and many other ancient fathers.

† Joseph videns uterum meum virtute Spiritus Sancti intumescere, expavit vehementer, non suspicatus contra me aliquid sinistrum, sed recordatus dicta Prophetarum prænuntiantium Filium Dei nasciturum de Virgine, reputabat se indignum

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says Our Lady, "seeing my form expand through the power of the Holy Ghost, was filled with astonishment and admiration; not entertaining any undue suspicion of me, but remembering the words of the Prophets, foretelling that the Son of God should be born of a Virgin, he thought himself unworthy to serve such a Mother, until the Angel in a dream bade him not fear, but minister to me in charity."

Gerson adopts the opinion of Saint Bernard and confirms it by this argument: "What did the angel say to him?" "Joseph, son of David, fear not to dwell with Mary, thy wife;" a proof that Joseph did not doubt Mary's purity, for in that case the angel would have rebuked him for his incredulity.*

In favor of this conjecture, we may cite as Trombelli teaches,† a Saint Jerome, who certainly judges that Saint Joseph had some knowledge of the mystery before the day on which he wished to leave Our Lady, and with Saint Jerome, Remigius, or the author of a learned commentary on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the words of which are well cited to prove that Saint Joseph was not a stranger to that mystery, before the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias. "Joseph saw," says Remigius, "that his spouse, who certainly had no intercourse with mortal man, had nevertheless conceived: he beheld her pregnant whom he knew to be chaste, and he revolved what he had read in the prophet Isaias: "A rod

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tali inservire Matri, donec angelus in somnis præcepit sibi non timere, sed cum charitate mihi ministrare. (St. Bridget, *Revelations*, Lib. VII. c. 25.)

* "Hinc Angelus ad eum; *Joseph, fili David, noli timere accipere Mariam conjugem tuam.* Non dixit; *Noli incredulus esse.*"—"Hence the angel said to him; *Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary thy wife.* He did not say; *Be not incredulous.*" (Gerson, *Serm. de Nativ. Mariæ.*)

† Saint Jerome undoubtedly favors this opinion. (Trombelli, Pt. cap. 19. num. 6.)

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shall come forth from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall ascend from this root" (that is, that the Man God should be born of a daughter of David, the son of Jesse, from whom Joseph's Virgin spouse descended); and again: "Behold a virgin shall conceive in her womb;" therefore he concluded that his spouse was the object of this prophecy, and that in her would be verified this prophecy, moulded seven hundred years before, with the greatest exactness in its choice of expression.* Other ancient Fathers can be cited, whose works are not printed. And if we do not cite these documents, we have the authority of Haymo, an ancient writer, who, treating the matter in the same way as Remigius, says that Joseph having read in the prophet Isaias that a virgin descended from David should conceive and bear a son, was not unprepared to believe that the prophecy was fulfilled in his spouse.† Liborius Siniscalchi, an eloquent writer, speaking of this point, expresses his opinion with these words, which adorn and confirm Saint Joseph's not merely problematical and conjectural, but real and certain knowledge of this mystery. "Few are the authors who say that Saint Joseph doubted the Blessed Virgin, and wished to leave her in consequence. God forgive me for thinking so great a Saint guilty of such a fault. The Doctors commonly affirm that Saint Joseph had no doubt or suspicion, however slight: but he was filled with confusion and wonder, because it had not yet been revealed to him how his spouse was to conceive in her womb the only begotten of

* Videbat namque sponsam concepisse suam, quam noverat a nullo viro fuisse adtractam, videbat gravidam quam vere noverat castam, et quia legerat in Prophetа; *De Radice Jesse exiet virga, et flos de radice ejus ascendet*, et noverat Beatam Mariam originem duxisse de Stirpe David, qui fuit filius Jesse, et legerat etiam; *Ecce Virgo in utero concipiet*, id circo non discrepebat, vel diffidebat hanc prophetiam esse implendam in ea.

† HAYMO, *Serm. in vigilia Nativitatis.*

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the Father. Beholding then, with his eyes, that fulfilled which he had not wholly understood, full of confusion at the thought of his own unworthiness to be in the company of a Mother worthy of being served by the highest monarchs, he resolved in his humble breast to leave her, but with such prudence that her honor should not be exposed to the words of the people." This reasoning is not a fruit of this pious writer's will, it is a thought which the Church chants in the vesper hymn for the feast of Saint Joseph,* which depicts the admiration, blended with fear or reverence, which compelled the Saint to withdraw from a spouse who had become by her rare sanctity the charm of his affections. This admiration, which the Church celebrates in her hymn, has been sung to the glory of the humility and profound respect of Saint Joseph, by the pious Spanish poet, Hurtado de Mendoza.†

While Joseph was revolving these thoughts, which troubled the very depth of his humility, and when he had resolved to withdraw in secret from the Mother of God, he fell asleep; and in his first slumber an angel appeared to him,‡ who, explaining the mystery which he had not per-

* Siniscalchi, *Discorsi per la novena del S. Natale, Tom. I. Dix.* 8. *ed.* 8. *giorno della novena.*

† "Almo cum tumidam germine conjugem,
Admirans, dubio tangeris anxius."
"Thee, when sore doubts of thy affianced wife
Had filled thy righteous spirit with dismay,
An angel visited, and with blest words,
Scattered thy fears away."

‡ "Primero que una indecencia
en María, dice, creo
prodigios, i antes que culpas,
esperar milagros debo . . .
Concebir sin varon puede
muger que pasa los fueros
humanos, y á glorias suyas,
limites señala eternos

fectly understood, ordered him not to leave his spouse. The Eternal Wisdom employed the traits of Saint Joseph's profound humility to instruct him, by an authentic testimony as to the fulfilment of a mystery, which he had hitherto only deemed probable in the person of his spouse, whose youth and entirely irreprehensible life gave no room to the shadow of a thought against her purity and fidelity. "Joseph, son of David!" said the Almighty by the voice of an angel,§ "fear not to dwell with thy spouse, Mary (or, as some say, "fear not to celebrate thy union by the festive ceremonies yet unperformed): the fruit of thy spouse's womb is the work of the Holy Ghost: think not of leaving her: the condition in which she is, is the fulfilment of that great and renowned event which Isaias announced, enlightened by the Holy Ghost. As long as thou shalt live, thou shalt be esteemed the father of the son to be born of her; and invested with so honorable a rank thou shalt with Mary give him the name of Jesus, which signifies Saviour. The God of Abraham and of Jacob, has chosen thee, that, being true spouse of the mother of the future Liberator, thou mayest be to her a guardian, and in the eyes of men a husband; for this adorable providence is for the present concealed from them." This is a part of what

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Que me altera? Qué me turba?
Qué me recata? Pudiendo
ser tálamo de Dios mismo
la pureza de su pecho?
Pero yo esposo? Yo digno
de este bien? Todo lo espero
en María; solo dudo
en la parte en que soi dueño."

Vida de la Virgen, p. 41-8.

§ "And while he thought on those things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. i. 20.)

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the envoy of God said briefly in the words given by Saint Matthew in his Gospel,* whereby he also declared to Joseph other circumstances of his election as spouse to the Immaculate Virgin.

By this apparition of the angel Joseph was perfectly enlightened, and conceived deeply how he should regard a virgin whom the Holy Ghost had selected as a spouse, and whom God the Father destined to be the Mother of his only-begotten Son. The last thing that the Gospel gives us to understand is, that Joseph, as a just man, esteemed himself so inferior to his spouse, that but for the command of the King and Lord of the Universe, and the obligation of concurring in the designs of his Divine Majesty, his humility would have shrunk from the guardianship of so precious a deposit. On receiving this instruction from the heavenly envoy, he awoke full of a holy calm and joy, and like a faithful and obedient servant of his Lord, he fulfilled it, at once devoting himself entirely, from that day, in honoring and serving the Mother of God, with the care and respect due her. When it became necessary for Heaven to instruct the Blessed Virgin, an angel appeared to her while awake, and the same was the case with Zachary and the shepherds ; but "to Saint Joseph," says Saint John Chrysostom,† "the angel

* Behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying; Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus . . . Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: "Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and bring forth." (Matt i. 20-23.)

† Mary, says St. John Chrysostom, required to be instructed by the angel while awake, because it was the first time that the Virgin was instructed in the most hidden mysteries; the shepherds needed it from their ignorance; and Zachary had the same necessity of having the angel appear to him while awake; but to the faithful Joseph the angel appeared while he slept. "Et cur non aperte, ut

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spoke while he slept, to give him on that occasion tokens of his acknowledged fidelity. And he surely proved his fidelity by his prompt obedience,* for without delay he altered his manner, remaining in the company of the Mother of God, without deviating from the angel's orders.†

Saint Joseph's trouble and fear lasted but a short time, as the Gospel hints,‡ and Saint John Chrysostom § says, in words that clearly mean that God did not delay in his counsels, but that soon after the pain he sent an angel to banish the fears which so greatly troubled him: "Immediately an angel stood by him." Heaven was prompt in consoling him, and Joseph was so prompt and punctual in obeying, that to wake was to obey. He did not doubt as Zachary had done, nor ask the angel to give him any proof of the truth of what he asserted.‖ "Able to disbelieve that dream," says the Abbot Trombelli, "as subject in its nature to illusion and deceit, Joseph asked the angel neither for a confirmation of the order nor of the mystery which he revealed, but immediately put in execution all he intimated. From this admirable resignation and obedience, the theologians with

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pastoribus et Zachariæ visus est, necnon etiam Virgini? Admodum fidelis vir erat (Joseph), neque egebat tali visione. (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. IV. in Matt.*)

* And Joseph, rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. (Matt. i. 24.)

† Cornelius Jansenius on the text of St. Matthew, explains this obedience of Saint Joseph in this eloquent passage: "In these words his great virtue of obedience and faith is commended to us, for he so quickly believed and obeyed the angel, merely warning him in sleep, and affirming a thing so new and incredible." (*Corn.* Jansenius, Bishop of Ghent, *in cap.* 1. *Matthæi.*)

‡ But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him. (Matt. i. 20.)

§ St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. IV. in Matth. num.* 3.

‖ And Zachary said to the angel: Whereby shall I know this? (Luke i. 18.)

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great probability infer, that the saint had, prior to this apparition, been several times honored with visits and warnings of angels, so that he immediately knew that this dream was from heaven. Adopting, then, this judgment of the divines, we cannot wonder at what we are told by the famous interpreters of Scripture, that the word *just*, employed by Saint Matthew, when speaking of the spouse of Mary, means adorned with all virtues, because he truly was a just man, and as such showed himself to the angels on this occasion.*

Some believe† that Saint Joseph was still in the house

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* TROMBELLI, *Part* 1. *cap.* 19. *num.* 18.

† Whether the Blessed Virgin was still in the house of Zachary, or had returned to Nazareth when St. Joseph perceived her pregnancy, is uncertain. Adhering to the more natural course, where we have no more certain notice, I am of the opinion that it was in Zachary's house. (CALINO, *Tom. IV. Lib.* 2. *cap.* 9.) Saint John Chrysostom (*Hom. IV. in Matth.*), and Saint Augustine (*Epistola* 153, *ad Macedonium cap.* 4. § 9.) think that St. Joseph believed the Blessed Virgin to have been unfaithful; but in St. Bernard's time the opinion of these fathers was least commonly held; because examining other ancient Fathers, we find the mass of opinions against Saint Augustine and Saint Chrysostom. Hence, following the criticism of Alphonso Castro, we may say that many things have been discovered in these later days which some Fathers of the primitive ages of the Church either did not know or doubted. (See BINER, *Apparatus ad jurisprudentiam, Part* 3. *art.* 7. § 2.)

Saint Bernard, cited for the milder opinion, says that his opinion is the common one of the Fathers who treat of this matter. "*Accipe non meam sed Patrum sententiam.*" And who are these Fathers? Saint Jerome and the author of the Imperfect Work attributed to Saint John Chrysostom, where we read: "O inæstimabilis laus Mariæ! Magis credebat (Joseph) castitati ejus quam utero ejus; et plus gratiæ quam naturæ. Conceptionem certe videbat et fornicationem suspicari non poterat." St. Basil and Origen, or the authors of the homilies current under their names, say the same. St. Bernard might have found the opinion also in many manuscripts, not even yet published, some of which are preserved at Bologna in the library of St. Savior's, according to the account of the Abate Trombelli, whose words are as follows: "What is here said will suffice to satisfy the piety and inquiry of the pious But I flatter myself that it will be well received by theologians also if I add what I found in an ancient commentary on St. Matthew, formed after

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of Zachary, when he became aware of the altered condition of his spouse, which can only be said by way of conjecture, as it is not declared in any documents of the time.

Well versed in the oracles of Isaias and the traditions of his nation, Joseph, like the mass of the Jews, expected that the promised Messias would be born of a virgin of the tribe of Juda, and a descendant of David: but before the angel had revealed the mystery to him in dreams, it did not appear to him by any authentic and solemn testimony of Heaven, that his illustrious spouse was the virgin destined to conceive and give to the world the glorious Liberator. At most he

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the fashion of a Catena of texts of ancient Fathers, and evidently written in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, in a still unpublished parchment preserved in our library. The extract is: "Illa inventa est habens de Spiritu Sancto: hoc docet sequens litera: Joseph iste, qui sciebat, se Mariam Virginem accepisse; et a viro intactam bene servasse, quid et unde illa conceptio erat, prorsus nesciebat. Cum ergo esset justus et juste omnia vellet agere: sciebat enim, illam castam esse et injuste ageret, si innocentem proderet, et ex alia parte timebat, se coram Deo peccare, si consentiret rei incognitæ.—Voluit occulte ut prius dimittere eam. ut scilicet hanc mediam viam eligens, neque innocentem proderet, neque rei incognitæ consentiendo, se coram Deo reum faceret. Vel aliter: Joseph, cum esset justus per fidem, qua credebat: Christum de Virgine nasciturum secundum prophetiam Isaiæ, qua dixerat; Virginem de domo David concepturam et Dominum parituram; et ideo aliquid magnum de ista suspicabatur, quare nollet eam traducere, humilians se ante tantam gratiam voluit dimittere."—"She was found to have conceived of the Holy Ghost. The passage following teaches that Joseph, who knew that he had received Mary a Virgin, and as such preserved her, could not understand this conception or whence it came. As he was just, he wished to do all justly: for he knew that she was chaste, and he would act unjustly if he betrayed the innocent, and on the other hand he feared that he would sin before God, if he consented to what he knew not, &c., hence he wished to send her away privately as soon as possible, that by this medium he might neither betray the innocent, nor by consenting to what he knew not, make himself guilty before God. *Or otherwise, As Joseph was just by faith, whereby he believed that Christ would be born of a Virgin, according to the prophecy of Isaias, wherein it was said, that a Virgin of the house of David should conceive and bear the Lord; therefore he suspected some great mystery in her, hence he would not deliver her up, but humbling himself before so great a grace he wished to part with her.* (Trombelli, Part 1. c. 19.)

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might know it privately from the lips of his spouse, or it might be suggested by reflections convincing him that the time of the mercies of the Lord was already accomplished; so his espousals with a daughter of Juda and descendant of David, consecrated to God by a vow of perpetual virginity, were as the first dawning above the horizon of the long expected day of the Jews, certain signs that the coming of the Saviour was at hand. The ancient prophecy of Jacob, wherein he announced to his son, the head of the tribe of Juda, the birth of the Expectation of the Gentiles, now seemed visibly verified; for the sceptre of Juda was now broken, and the natives deprived of all public authority. Herod of Ascalon, surnamed the Great, was King of the Jews: an Idumean on his father's side, an Arab in manners, a foreigner too on his mother's side, and a usurper of the crown of Judea only by the protection and overwhelming influence of the Romans. This stripping Juda of the power and sceptre, this wresting of both from that famous tribe and from the royal line of David, were the signs of the Messias' coming: and by them, joined to the circumstances of the espousals of the Blessed Virgin, every one must feel that Joseph had sufficient grounds to augur the lot of his spouse, and deem her selection probable.

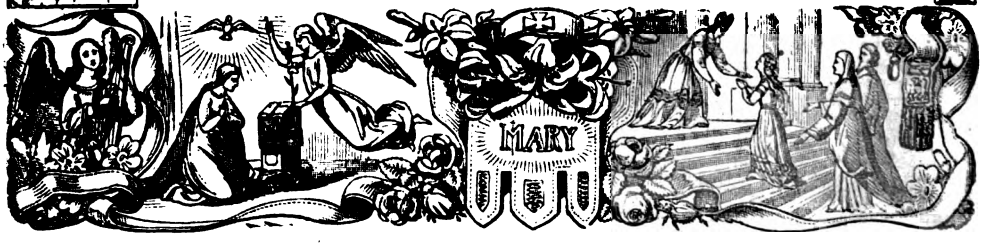
There are, I admit, no sacred or other documents to supply the silence of the inspired historians, so as to prove to a demonstration that Saint Joseph conjectured by these circumstances the future glory of his spouse, but we cannot for that reason deny what does not pass the bounds of probable conjecture. Some writers, as well ancient as modern, as it appears, are inclined to believe that the most holy patriarch, before the apparition of the angel, was not even by a conjectural knowledge convinced that the sacred virgin, confided to him rather as a guardian than a husband, could

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be the chosen one of God for the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaias. I cannot conform to this idea; for, as others drew from the prodigies wrought by Jesus, strong presumptions for believing him to be the Son of God and promised Messias, it is unbecoming to dispute or deny Joseph the right of applying to his glorious spouse, as probable, the grace of being chosen as mother of that Redeemer, who, seated on the throne of David, was to change his earthly empire to a spiritual kingdom. Such was the opinion of Remigius and Haymo, celebrated writers in their day, and cited by us in a previous chapter.

As regards the time when Saint Joseph had, if we may so express it, private information as to the execution of the most sublime of mysteries in the most pure womb of his spouse, I repeat that we do not read in authentic records that the Blessed Virgin Mary communicated to her spouse the fact of the embassy and salutation of the Archangel Gabriel, when that sovereign spirit, having fulfilled his mission, departed. But, appealing to probability and likelihood, there is no error in conjecturing this. Thomas Rovero* believes that the Mother of God, immediately after the heavenly messenger announced to her her incomprehensible dignity, informed her spouse of the event, and confirms his opinion by the following learned argument: "At the unexpected apparition of the angel, who, being deputed for the work of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, saluted the glorious Virgin, informing her that she was chosen as Mother of the Son of the Most High, Mary was troubled at the nature of the message, and the angel dissipated the fears which disquieted her. All the Fathers regard these unreflected movements of the soul of the Blessed Virgin as actions of an eminent virtue."

* Rovero, *on the Blessed Virgin*, p. 162.



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"Mary's fear," says Saint Bernard,* "was not surprise at any infidelity, nor trouble of her understanding caused by any spectre, raised by the weakness of the fancy: she was surprised only at the unwonted way in which she was saluted by the angel of the Lord." The sacred Virgin fears, and like a most prudent one examines the cause whence her fear arises, with the exactness of a delicate conscience, in order to resolve correctly. Imitating Saint Bernard, the celebrated theologian Gerson † says, that when he saw his spouse with child, he became thoughtful, and wished to leave her; he was not troubled, but the very greatness of the mystery which now entered his eyes, surprised him, but without any idea of infidelity on the part of the Immaculate Virgin disconcerting the harmony of his heart. It seemed to Joseph a wonder worthy of the greatest admiration, that new spectacle thus about to verify the prophecies which announced a Redeemer; he saw that the Son of God, conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, visibly grew in the most pure womb of his spouse, and this seemed to him new and wondrous: as too, it seemed to Mary a rare novelty for her to be a virgin and a mother. The agitation in both was no idea of infidelity, it was a kind of overpowering awe: and as Mary and Joseph equally shared that fear or doubt, which went no further than awe, the angel did not reprove them as faithless or incredulous, nor did the Lord chastise them as he did Zachary ‡ when that priest asked the envoy of God for proof of the fruitfulness of Saint Elizabeth, which he announced; he only told them by the voice of the archangel,

* Turbata est sed not perturbata. "Mary was troubled but not perturbed." (St. Bernard, *Hom.* 1. *super Missus est.*)

† Gerson, *De Nativitate Mariæ Virginis, part* 3.

‡ And Zachary said to the angel: Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man; and my wife is advanced in years. (Luke i. 18.)

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not to fear. "Fear not, Mary." * "Joseph, son of David, fear not." †

"To understand the degree attained by the virtue and respect of Saint Joseph on beholding the fulfilment of the prophecies, it is proper to determine the period when he had his first idea of the Incarnation of the Divine Word in his spouse's womb. Saint Matthew,‡ before relating that the angel addressed Saint Joseph in his sleep, says, that without using his marital rights, he had discovered that his spouse had conceived through the operation of the Holy Ghost. And who was the person who had the glory of being the first to know the execution of this mystery? The great doctor and master of the Scriptures, Saint Jerome,§ answers that it was Joseph, whom, as spouse and guardian, it was becoming that the tidings of the happy state of his spouse should reach before all others: Joseph was the first who observed Mary's condition, as he by his right and privilege as husband could not be unaware of the appearance of his spouse. "Yes," says Saint Basil,‖ "it was Saint Joseph who was informed

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* And the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary. (Luke i. 30.)

† Joseph, son of David, fear not. (Matt i. 20.)

‡ When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matt i. 18.)

§ Non ab alio inventa est quam a Joseph, qui pene licentia maritali futuræ uxoris omnia noverat. (St. Jerome, *in Matt. Lib. II.*) Vocat Hieronymus Mariam futuram uxorem, non quod id temporis initum non fuisset matrimonium, sed quia ut ait Hilarius apud Maldonatum: (*In Matt.* i. 25.) Ante sponsa erat, postea in nomen transivit uxoris, non quod marito conjuncta fuerit, sed quod peperit ut faciunt uxores.

‖ "Inventa est gravida de Spiritu Sancto. Ambo invenit Joseph et conceptionem et causam."—"Joseph discovered both the fact of Conception and the cause." (St. Basil, Hom. xxv.)

We must note here, that although Saint Jerome, even after the Blessed Virgin brought forth the Man God, calls her the future wife of Joseph; yet he did not by these expressions mean to exclude the idea of a real marriage, his intent being by

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by his spouse when the mystery was scarcely accomplished, that she had by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost conceived in her womb the Son of the Most High. The two facts were made known to Saint Joseph at the same moment, the Incarnation and the sovereign Author of so tremendous a work. I cannot doubt but that this confidence was natural from the sacred ties which united these two souls, destined to be the object of a peculiar providence. It did not become the fame of the Blessed Virgin, that she should for any time conceal from her spouse an event which so much concerned his honor and conscience. Nor was it reconcilable with the loyalty due such an alliance, that Joseph should not have known that his wife was Mother of God, till he saw with his own eyes the effects and signs of the fruit which she bore in her womb. It was not becoming, I repeat, that the situation of that Blessed Virgin, whom the most adorable Providence had given Joseph for a spouse and committed to his care, should become known to him only some months after. "God," says Saint Ambrose in his first book on the Gospel of Saint Luke, "watched with such loving providence over the interests of his mother, that he exposed to the doubts of some the origin of his generation, that no spot might be attributed to the brilliant purity of her honor. How then can we be convinced that God, who in a singular manner regarded his mother's honor and reputation, would permit Joseph, intrusted with that treasure, to be ignorant of the condition of his spouse, till his very eyes suddenly discovered the fact, in this way exposing him, if not to thoughts against the fidelity, at least against the innocence of his spouse. "I cannot believe," says

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the words "future wife" to mean that Joseph and Mary acted with such purity, that they seemed rather betrothed than married.



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Gerson,* "that the Blessed Virgin would have concealed from her holy spouse the apparition of the angel, and the object of his coming. If I must express my opinion, I will affirm it as a point that I cannot doubt, that the Blessed Virgin, before leaving Nazareth for the hilly country to visit Saint Elizabeth, informed Saint Joseph, that she had already given her consent, that without detriment to the virginity which she had vowed to God, the Eternal Word should take flesh in her womb, and that she had already conceived him in her womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost. If this is well examined, it seems more probable that Joseph was informed of this mystery before Elizabeth; as well by the confidence due him in consequence of his connection with her in marriage, as for his eminent virtue which raised him above all the prophets and patriarchs, above all saints. If Saint Elizabeth was favored with a knowledge of this mystery, that she might understand that she had in her house the mother of her Lord, with greater reason should Joseph be enlightened, for he was spouse, companion, and guardian of the Blessed Virgin, and reputed father of the Man God. At the first words of the Blessed Virgin's salutation, the Divine Spirit declared to Saint Elizabeth the happy mystery which had transpired at Nazareth, and shall we believe that that Spirit would conceal what it had operated on his spouse from Joseph, a man enlightened and chosen for the execution of the divine decrees, and, as Saint Bernard† says, filled with a most lofty spirit to penetrate and share in the sublimest mysteries?"

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* GERSON, *Epist. super institut. festi S. Josephi.*

† Illi data est intelligentia in mysteriis somniorum; isti datum est conscium fieri, ac participem cœlestium sacramentorum."—"To the former Joseph was given understanding of the mystery of dreams; to the last Joseph to be conscious of and partake in heavenly mysteries." (ST. BERNARD, *Hom. 2. super Missus est.*)

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We must now solve a difficulty arising from words of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, which induced several ancient writers to lay down that Saint Joseph doubted the honor of his most holy spouse, and that God, as he permitted Saint Thomas to doubt of his resurrection, also chose to permit Saint Joseph to doubt for a time, with the design that that very doubt should in the sequel redound to the honor of the Blessed Virgin, and prove an authentic testimony of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jacob and the oracle of Isaias. "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost." If Joseph (say some Fathers) was instructed at the time of the annunciation, and learned from the lips of his spouse that she had by the command of heaven conceived the Son of the Most High, why should the angel appear to him in sleep, order him to lay aside his fears, and inform him as to the author of that guest which appeared in the womb of the Virgin? We answer, that the angel appeared to the most holy spouse of the Mother of God, to confirm by a solid and authentic testimony, what he had conjectured, and what the Blessed Virgin had confided to him as her consort and guardian of her person, at the time of the accomplishment of the mystery. This answer is based on the opinion of grave theologians,* who think that the Blessed Virgin, although she

* "Vel tandem dici potest, licet Virgo privatim mysterium intelligeret, se tamen gessisse, ac si id nesciret; tum ut ipsa suum immobile propositum ostenderet: tum ut angelus suæ conceptionis modum divina auctoritate testaretur, sicut infra dicemus de Joanne quando misit ad interrogandum Christum: 'Tu quis es?'" —"Or finally, it may be said that, although the Blessed Virgin privately understood the mystery, yet nevertheless acted as though she did not, that she might show her unshaken resolve, and also that the angel might testify by divine authority the method of her conception, as we shall show of John, when he sent to ask Christ; Who art thou?" (SUAREZ, *Tom II. in D.* 3. *disp.* 6. § 2.)

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might have privately, that is, by some private revelation, understood the secret of conceiving the Son of God without detriment to her virginity, might nevertheless interrogate the envoy of the Almighty as to the accomplishment of that mystery, that the angel might illuminate her still more clearly, and give her a solid and authentic testimony of what she otherwise understood, as to the verification of that mystery, so frequently prophesied. Just as the Baptist, who before his birth knew of the Messias' coming, yet sent to ask him whether he was the Expected of the Jews, or whether another was to come to redeem them.

Hence we must say with Theophylact that the reason given by the angel was a powerful and mighty one, even though his fear was only reverential, caused by his knowledge of the dignity and excellence of his spouse. The angel, by explaining that it was a work of the Holy Ghost, gave him a solemn and authentic confirmation, and greater light than he had previously had, to prefer in that miraculous work the claims of heaven to the designs of his humility and the fears of his respect.* By the revelation of the Sovereign Spirit Joseph learned a mystery not yet manifested to him, namely, that it was the decree of the Eternal Wisdom, that he should be outwardly reputed as father of that son whom the Virgin Mary had conceived by the miraculous operation of the Almighty, and that to carry out to its fulfilment this decree, it became him not to leave the mother. Haymo,† a grave

* "Tu times adjungi illæ, quia ex Spiritu Sancto concepit: sed ne timeas accipere, est enim uxor tua, et a Domino dictum propter hanc relinquet homo patrem et matrem."—"Thou fearest to be united to her, because she has conceived of the Holy Ghost; but fear not to take her, for she is thy wife, and it has been said by the Lord, for this shall a man leave his father and his mother." (THEOPHYLACT, *in Matt.* i.)

† "Cur dimittere voluit? Quia nec totum scivit, nec totum ignoravit."—

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author, and one of the most learned of his time, argues in this wise in confirmation of this opinion: Joseph knew already that the Son of God had taken flesh in the most pure womb of his virgin spouse, but he was not informed of all the consequences resulting from so high a mystery, and hence he sought to leave the Mother of Jesus. I mean, that although he knew that the Blessed Virgin was really Mother of God, yet he had not understood that the design of heaven in his marriage was that he should appear to the eyes of men as the husband of the Virgin, and that invested with the quality of father, he should on the day of the circumcision give the child the name of Jesus, and continue to serve both son and mother. This being so, it is necessary to affirm that the angel's instruction was timely for two reasons: first, that Joseph might have a greater and more solemn testimony as to the mystery which his spouse had confided to him; secondly, that understanding God's designs in his sacred spousals, he might not think of leaving the Blessed Virgin. Joseph awoke highly enlightened, and adoring the decrees of Heaven he fulfilled them with the most complete and faithful obedience. His doubt sprang from wonder, like the fear of the Blessed Virgin when the angel announced her future felicity. "Joseph, like Mary," says Rovero,* "was amazed at the novelty and greatness of the mystery, and both were enlightened by the heavenly messenger. Each laid fear aside, and with the most punctual obedience accepted what Heaven suggested. Mary offered herself to the will of the Almighty signified by the angel,

"Why did he wish to leave her? Because he neither fully knew, nor was entirely ignorant." (HAYMO, *Hom.* 1 *in Vigil. Nativ.*)

* Joseph's conduct in his doubts and fears was like that pursued by Mary. Both were amazed at the novelty and greatness of the mystery . . . Both were enlightened and instructed by the discourse of the Angel. (ROVERO, *Discorsi sopra la Vita della B. Virgine Maria.*)

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and Joseph took the spouse, whom in thought he had already left, imagining himself unworthy to appear in the presence of that prodigy of purity, and that incomparable dignity."

We must nevertheless notice, that some say that Saint John Chrysostom,* Saint Augustine,† and other holy Fathers whom they cite, and whom Suarez ‡ and Maldonado § apparently follow, think that Saint Joseph had some suspicion or doubt of the fidelity of the Blessed Virgin when he perceived her condition. The expressions used by these Fathers in this matter, are not so precise as to exclude a favorable interpretation. Some words of Saint John Chrysostom are indeed commonly cited, to prove that Saint Joseph doubted the fidelity of his spouse, but it is not easy to decide what was the opinion of this saint, because translators vary as to the meaning of his words. The ancients thus interpreted the words of Chrysostom, "Joseph seeing Mary with child, was greatly troubled." ‖ More recent interpreters rejecting this translation, give another meaning to Chrysostom's words, and affirm in all confidence that Joseph conceived a suspicion derogatory to Mary's honor and name.¶ If this interpretation be correct, I shall, like the angelic doctor in a similar case,** reply, that Chrysostom went too far, or in this point exceeded the bounds of critical correctness. I answer in this way, not so much through respect and veneration for Saint Joseph, as for the

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* St. Chrysostom, *Homil. VIII. in Matth.*

† St. Augustine, *Serm.* 343.

‡ Suarez, Tom. 2. in 3. p. Disp. 7. Sect. 2.

§ Maldonado, *in Cap.* 1. *Matth.*

‖ Videndo quippe Joseph gravidam Virginem, in conturbationem incidit maximam. (*Ancient Version.*)

¶ Videt ille virginem uterum gestantem, ea de re turbatur . . . adulteram enim suspicabatur. (*Recent Version.*)

** St. Thomas, 3. p. q. 27. art. 4. ad. 3. ubi ait excessisse Chrysostomum, cum Mariæ Virgini inanem gloriolam attribuit.

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Blessed Virgin, whose honor and purity God would not permit any one to be so hardy as to doubt, as Saint Ambrose said.

Saint Augustine does indeed employ the expression, "Joseph was tempted by suspicion," "suspicione tentatus est," but this does not mean suspicion of crime, but of adoration, judgment, or conjecture of something great, as if we were to say: Joseph, knowing that the Blessed Virgin was of blameless life, judged that the new state in which he saw her, was a sign of something singular, and hence he would not betray her. Such, too, is the language of some ancient manuscripts preserved in St. Savior's library in Bologna.*

Some admit that these Fathers attribute to Saint Joseph doubt or suspicion as to the purity of his spouse, because in those first centuries of the Church, there did not shine forth all those lights which the Divine Spirit has successively deigned to communicate to the expounders of the Holy Scriptures. Hence modern critics † say that in these last ages many points have been discovered which the ancients did not know or doubted.

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* See page 95.

† Alphonsus Castro and Joseph Biner.





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CHAPTER VI.

BIRTH OF THE SON OF GOD, AND THE LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH TILL THEN—THE SHEPHERDS COME TO ADORE THE INFANT GOD IN THE PRESENCE OF ST. JOSEPH—THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE RITE.

THE most holy patriarch, consoled by the presence of the angel, altered his resolution, and continued to serve, with the greatest respect and care, her whom he now regarded by the solemn and authentic testimony of an angel, as the true Mother of God, and spouse of the Holy Ghost. All his endeavor was to regard the Blessed Virgin more as a sovereign than a spouse, combining his labor with the continual exercise of the most heroic virtues, and with the contemplation of the prophecies towards the human race, of which the fulfilment had now begun. The Gospel does not say it; but considering the sanctity of so enlightened a hero, it is very

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THE HOLY FAMILY.

James B Kirker
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probable that in those six months in which he lived at Nazareth before the birth of the Messias, he had frequent apparitions of angels, as they could not but have descended from heaven to adore their Creator, who, invested with human flesh, now lay hidden in Mary's virginal womb.

In the last days of these six months, when the birth of the Child-God now approached, Joseph, in obedience to the decrees of Cæsar, set out with the Blessed Virgin from Nazareth for Bethlehem, his city, or at the least the original seat of the royal family of David, from which both the saint and his most noble spouse were descended. Already were fulfilled the preparatives, which in the designs and forecast of the Eternal Wisdom were to precede the happy birth of the Man-God: it now only remained for Joseph and his most holy spouse to proceed to Bethlehem of Juda, where, as the sacred oracles declared, the Redeemer was to be born. For this purpose, God, who directs to his own ends the resolutions of men, so ordained that Augustus Cæsar, at that very time, should by a general mandate command the whole world to be enrolled. The order of the imperial court having been published by Cyrinus or Quirinus, President of the Province of Syria, bordering on Judea (to whom, from motives of Roman policy this affair was committed), Joseph descended to Bethlehem with his most holy spouse, to enroll his name and pay his census, a tax of a coin of the country * contributed by each person as he gave in his name to the imperial commissaries. If the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was made partly by land and partly by water, the distance was about one hundred and twenty miles; if all by land, about ninety. Saint Joseph's admirable prudence, and the condition of the

* Denario in censum pro singulis persoluto. (TIRINUS, *in Luc.* i. 1.) The denarius was worth about fifteen cents.

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Blessed Virgin, from the nearness of her time of delivery, induce us to believe that the journey was all made by land, and that our Lady had such conveniences as her spouse's position in life enabled him to afford. The distance was usually travelled in five days, according to the accounts of those versed in the Jewish customs; and hence it is believed that after that space of time the Blessed Virgin arrived, not at a suburb, as Hyacinth Serri pretends, but at the city or town of Bethlehem, according to Saint Justin, the martyr, himself a native of Palestine,* Eusebius† and Bochart,‡ who are more worthy of credit than Serri. Bethlehem was a place of small size, and the lodgings which it afforded were already occupied or engaged by families, who, from being attended with the stronger recommendation of wealth, always get in an inn sooner than the poor; and for this reason Saint Joseph took up for his abode with that stable in a cave, which the decrees of heaven had determined as the place of the birth of the Messias and new monarch of Judea, who, as soon as he was born, according to critical historians and theologians, was placed by angels in the arms of his most holy mother. Saint

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* "Vicus autem quidam est in regione Judæorum distans stadiis triginta quinque (id est, quatuor millia passuum) ab Hierosolymis, in quo natus est Jesus Christus."—"Bethlehem, where Jesus Christ was born, is a certain village in Judea, distant 35 stadia, that is four miles, from Jerusalem." (St. Justin, Martyr, *Apologia prima*, § 34.)

† "Et adhuc locum incolentes, tanquam a patribus ad ipsos profecta traditione, iis qui locorum cognoscendorum gratia Bethleem proficisci consueverunt, testantur sermonum probantes veritatem per agri demonstrationem, in quo enixa Virgo deposuit infantem."—"And those who now inhabit the place, by the tradition handed down from their forefathers, so testify to those who go to Bethlehem to see the spot, and prove the truth of their words, by showing the field where the Blessed Virgin brought forth her Son." (Eusebius, *Demonstrat. Evangel.* Lib. VII. cap. 2.) Casaubon reads antri (cave) instead of agri (field.)

‡ Bochart, *Descriptio Terræ Sanctæ.*

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Joseph, as the Abate Trombelli says,* upon the advent, the happy moment when the Infant God was about to come forth, left the grotto, as propriety and respect to the Blessed Virgin required; but when Jesus was born, swathed and laid in the manger, the saint returned, summoned either by the voice of the Mother of the God, or the cry of the child, or else by the music of the angelic hosts: and first adoring the new-born Saviour, he took him in his arms and folded him in the cloak or mantle which he wore; a fragment of which, as Octavius Pancirollus and the learned continuators of Bollandus write, is preserved at Rome among the relics of the Church of Saint Cecilia *tras Tevere*.†

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* Trombelli, Part. I. cap. 20. num. 4. page 99.

† Papebrochius, *ad diem* 19 *Martii*.

Hyacinth Serri thinks that Christ was born outside the walls of Jerusalem, and with great complacency says: "I confidently assert that Christ was born outside of Bethlehem, in a field in the suburbs." (*Exerc.* 20. § 2.) But Anthony Sandinus, (*De Christo D.* cap. 1. § 7), says that Serri first corrupted the texts of Justin Martyr, Eusebius and Bochart, and then confidently advanced his opinion with his usual boldness. Justin writes thus: "Nato vero tunc puero in Bethlehem, quoniam Joseph non habebat in vico illo ubi diverteret, in specu quodam prope vicum divertit; et cum tunc illic essent, ibi peperit Maria Christum."—"The child was born then in Bethlehem, because Joseph having no place in the town to put up at, turned to a cave near the town, and while they were there, Mary there brought forth the Christ." (St. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryphone.* § 78.)

Eusebius, already cited, expressly mentions Bethlehem; and yet withal Serri has the temerity to assert that Christ was born in a suburb, outside of the walls of Bethlehem, as if the place had walls, unless he merely means the limits of the town. Bochart says, "juxta muros civitatis erat stabulum."—"There was a stable near the walls of the city," (*Apud. Baronium ad ann.* 1. § 2.) and Serri reads *in agro suburbano;* restraining the meaning of the words, "near the walls," to the outside, but excluding the inside.

Petavius, a far better theologian and critic than Serri, says, that those who uphold the opinion that Saint Joseph remained with the Blessed Virgin outside of the city or town, have no foundation for it. (*Rationarii temporum, Tom.* 2. *Lib. IV. cap.* 2.) Not to fatigue our readers with a cloud of texts, I omit the Latin, and merely give a translation of this passage of Petavius: "To manifest the fidelity

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From the very stable of Bethlehem where Joseph was rejoicing over the new-born Infant God, the heavenly spirits in glad attire issued forth, we may well suppose, for the tower of Ader, which is between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and about three quarters of a mile from the latter. At the fourth watch in the morning, that is, as the dawn was about breaking over the horizon, according to Arnobius,* they gave the shepherds the happy tidings of the Messias' birth; and these entered the city, whose gates, if it had any,† either stood open from its being a time of peace, or opened miraculously,‡ they

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of the prophecy of Micheas (v. 1), Joseph arrived with the Blessed Virgin, and in that very spot our Lady bore Him who was the salvation of the human race. I mean to say that in that very town, and in the public hospice, as St. Luke says; where finding no lodging, they went to a stable under a rock, made there apparently because the ground is harsh and stony from the rocks which the Author of Nature has piled there; and hence the ancients, like Justin, call it a cave or grotto. That Christ was born in the very town of Bethlehem itself seems most probable, as the words of Micheas signify this, when they say that the Messias shall be born in Bethlehem; and hence those who imagine that he was born in a suburb outside of the limits of Bethlehem, give suburbs to that little place without any authority for so doing. And they are at variance with Bede, who says that the grotto where Jesus was born is inside of Bethlehem."

Bethlehem is sometimes in the Evangelical books called city, and sometimes a small town as Saint Epiphanius notes. (*Hæres.* 51. § 9.)

* "Vigilia autem quarta matutina, quæ in ortum luminis adimpletur, ut scribit Arnobius in Ps. 129."—"About the fourth morning watch, which ends at daylight, as Arnobius writes on Ps. cxxix." (SANDINUS, *De Christo*, Cap. 11, § 9.)

† "Erant Pastores vigilantes in agro pernoctantes et stabulantes, quod in calidis regionibus, etiam in hieme, etiam media nocte frequentissimum esse docui in chronico contra Scaligerum, stolide hinc inferentem, non fuisse Christum media hieme natum."—"The shepherds were keeping the night-watch in the field, and fold, which was frequent even in winter, and at midnight in warm countries, as I have shown in the chronicle against Scaliger, who from this foolishly inferred that Christ was not born in mid-winter." (TIRINUS, *in cap.* 2. *Lucæ.* v. 8.)

‡ Si Bethlehem erat vicus, verisimile fuit nec muros habuisse; si oppidum fuit muris cinctum, verisimile est, in tam alta pace portas, ut plurimum, relictas fuisse apertas, aut certé divina providentia evenisse, ut (pastoribus) paterent portæ. (CASAUBON, Exercitat. 2. § 1.)

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adored amid the brilliant light and music of the heavens the Infant God, in the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph.

The joy of these most happy spouses at this adoration, cannot easily be expressed in human words, but each may figure it in his thoughts. The shepherds without doubt told the reason of their coming, and the mode in which the angels had given them the plausible notice of the Redeemer's birth. The mother certainly engraved in the bottom of her heart the simple expressions of the shepherds, preserving them in her breast to reveal them in due time.* And Saint Joseph, too, we must believe did the same, to instruct the Jews by this account, or to console himself in the trials of which one so enlightened must have had some foreshadowing, or which he might conjecture awaited him ; and if he did not preserve in his blessed soul all that he experienced for this cause, he would keep present the glorious and wonderful events of that night, to give unremitting thanks to the Almighty for such signal mercies and such rich favors.

The law of circumcision, which had to be observed on the eighth day after birth, was a religious ceremony introduced by order of the God of Israel, in order to distinguish and set apart the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from the rest of the nations of earth. By this device and sign the Hebrews were made and declared members of the chosen people and observers of the law. The practice of this rite, although it dated back before the time of Moses, nevertheless became the base and foundation of the whole Mosaic law. In consequence of this law the Infant God, the Saviour of the human race, was circumcised ; because He in his majesty wished to show the sons of Juda, and in them the whole world, that he came

* But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke ii. 19.)

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to fulfil the law entirely before abrogating it, and declaring himself author of a more excellent worship.

The minister appointed to perform the circumcision is not certain. Painters, to represent this ministry, introduce a priest of the order of Aaron, wearing a tiara and other insignia of his office. These paintings have no foundation, as neither in sacred history or in the tradition of the Jews, is this circumstance stated. In the Scriptures we merely read, that mothers on one or two occasions performed the rite.* In a book entitled, *De vera Circumcisione*, to be found among the books improperly ascribed to Saint Jerome, we read† that the Blessed Virgin did this duty. The same statement is made in the book of the Lamentation of the Virgin, which some attribute to Saint Bernard.‡ Sandinus, without mentioning the paintings which represent a priest as the minister of this function, says,§ that either the Virgin, Mother of the Infant God, or Saint Joseph, who stood in place of father to him, complied with this sacred ceremony. Nevertheless, the more common opinion attributes the execution of this rite to Saint Joseph, and the opinion is based on the words of Saint Ephrem, of Syria,‖ an author who flourished in the time of Saint Basil, and who is much esteemed for his

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* Immediately Sephora took a very sharp stone and circumcised the foreskin of her son. (Exod. iv. 25.) "Now the women that circumcised their children were slain according to the commandment of King Antiochus. (1 Mach. i. 63.)

† Christus octava die circumciditur, a Matre utique. (*Lib. de vera circumcisione, cap.* 18.)

‡ "Christum genuit, lactavit, octava die circumcidit."—"Mary brought forth Christ, nursed him, and circumcised him on the eighth day." (*Auctor Libri de Lamentatione Virginis.*)

§ Christum igitur vel Josephus, vel Maria mater circumcidit. (SANDINUS, *De Christo*, cap. 2. § 3.)

‖ "Si non erat caro (Christus) quem Joseph circumcidit."—"Was not Christ flesh, whom Joseph circumcised?" (ST. EPHREM, *Orat. de Transfiguratione Domini.*)

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piety and learning. So clear are the words in which this Saint affirms it, that even Theophilus Rainaud * and Hyacinth Serri,† most severe critics, are obliged to confess openly that Saint Joseph was the minister of the circumcision. This opinion, besides the truly great authority of Saint Ephrem, has another powerful testimony, which is, the custom of the Jews, among whom it was usual for the head of the family, that is for the father, to circumcise his children. And if at times mothers did, it was because necessity compelled it, or in consequence of the husband's absence. The Abbot Trombelli ‡ thinks that these two opinions can be barely reconciled by saying that the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph both took part in the ceremony, the mother holding the child in her hands, and Saint Joseph executing the circumcision with a knife or stone instrument made for the purpose. In this way Mary and Joseph were the ministers of that painful execution, in which Jesus offered the first fruits of his most precious blood, sufficient, in that very hour, had his Eternal Father wished so to accept it, for the redemption of the universe.

On the day that the child was circumcised, the name also was given, according to the Hebrew custom: accordingly Joseph § and Mary,‖ who had on this point secret orders from

* "Nec Virgo, tametsi robore mentis infracto ad omnes Dei voluntates exequendas, recedere ab eo usu voluisse censenda est; quare circumcisionem ab ea permissam Josepho, haud gravate concedo"—"And though the Blessed Virgin was unbroken in mind to fulfil in all the will of God, we are not to suppose that she departed from the usual custom; and I readily concede that she left the circumcision to Joseph." (THEOP. RAYNAUD, *Diptych. Marian*, Part. 1. punct. 8. numb. 12.)

† SERRI, *Exercitat.* 33. *num.* 4.

‡ TROMBELLI, *Life of St. Joseph*, *ch.* 21.

§ Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save the people from their sins. (Matt i. 21.)

‖ Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and

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heaven, gave him the thrice holy name of JESUS, whereby God vouchsafed to signify that that child was the salvation of the world, and Saviour of the human race. A signification which shot a ray of joy through the loving hearts of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, greatly appalled at the exercise of that painful ceremony which took place in the very stable and grotto of Bethlehem, this being at the time the house of the parents, and consequently the place where, according to all ancient accounts and practice, the law of circumcision was fulfilled ; for we do not know that the Jews had any precept which obliged them to circumcise their children in the synagogue or in the temple, or to call in the ministers of the altar to perform the rite.

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thou shalt call his name Jesus. (Luke i. 33.) "Inde Bethlehemi in luce editus atque in spelunca circumcisus."—"Born then in Bethlehem and circumcised in a cave." (ST. EPIPHANIUS, *Hæres.* 20.)



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This day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke II. 11

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New York

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CHAPTER VII.

THE WISE MEN ADORE THE INFANT GOD IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS REPUTED FATHER, ST. JOSEPH.

KEEPING aloof from all discussion of the various doubts which arise as to the coming of the Wise Men, it will suffice to know that they arrived at Bethlehem before Saint Joseph received order to retire to Egypt with his family, and that after the Wise Men adored the new King of the Jews, whom they sought, and offered him gifts, the jealousy of the monarch of Judea was aroused, and he, by a cruel mandate, ordered the death of all the children who had been born in Bethlehem and its vicinity, for the space of two years. In this cruel slaughter, the tyrant supposed that he took out of the world the heir of that throne, an heir who even in the cradle filled his soul with dread. This fear the prince had before Saint Joseph received orders to fly into Egypt. That the holy

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Patriarch was present when the Orientals,* in sign of gratitude, offered gold, incense and myrrh, to the Infant God, is not indeed clearly stated in the Gospels; yet, considering the honor and affection with which he seconded the designs of Heaven in his spousals with the Blessed Virgin, we cannot doubt his presence. Nor is it credible that Saint Joseph, educated according to the splendor of his birth, would have retired from the grotto—the house, that the adorable Providence of Heaven had, from superior motives, disposed and prepared beforehand, when, according to the best founded traditions, there presented themselves to Him who was esteemed his son, three crowned heads† of the East, who, next after the shepherds of Judea, were the first fruits of Christianity. So far was Saint John Chrysostom from doubting Saint Joseph's presence at the arrival of the Wise Men, that, on the contrary, he says, that God wishing to regard his virtue and heroic conformity to the conduct of heaven, consoled him by the apparition of the star, and the coming of the Wise Men with their profound demonstrations of respect for the Infant God.

Paintings, although they commonly have no greater

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* "Obtulerunt Christo non stipem, sed munera, more Arabum, et cæterorum Orientalium, qui quoties Regem adoraturi accedunt, munera deferunt, quo testantur se suaque omnia illi subdita esse . . . Ut vere profiteantur, se Christum regem suum agnoscere."—"The Wise Men offered Christ not alms, but gifts, after the manner of the Arabs and other Orientals, who never approached to do homage to the king without gifts, to show that they and all they have are subject to him . . . That they may truly profess that they recognized Christ as their king." (TIRINUS, *in Luc.* ii. 11.)

† "Erant autem hi, qui ad Christum accurrerunt tres numero et quidem (etsi rideat Calvinus) reges, ut communis habet traditio, id est, Reguli, seu Principes phrasi Scripturæ."—"Those who thus came to Christ were three in number, and, as common tradition says, Kings (laugh as Calvin may), that is, Rulers or Princes, as the Scripture phrase is." (TIRINUS, *in Luc.* ii. 10.)

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authority, when ancient facts in history are disputed, nevertheless, in the present instance as they concur with probability and with the opinion expressed by Saint John Chrysostom,* critics accept the ancient paintings, sculptures and mosaics, which represent Saint Joseph as present at the adoration of the Arabian Princes; signifying by this that the Saint, together with the Mother of God, shared in the honors done the new King of the Jews and Divine Liberator of the human race.

Some interpreters of Scripture say, that this adoration, whereby heaven vouchsafed to console Saint Joseph in these calamities, did not take place at the stable and grotto of Bethlehem, but in a house to which the Holy Family had removed. Their opinion is based on the text of the Evangelist, "and entering into the house they found the child with Mary, his mother, and falling down they adored him;" but this conjecture has no force, because the Jews, as the learned Tirinus remarks, call any dwelling even for animals, a house.† Saint Justin, the martyr, a man well versed in the traditions of the Hebrews, although he does not notice this point alleged by Tirinus, says most clearly, that the Wise Men, entering the very stable in which the Blessed Virgin brought forth Christ, found there the Infant God.‡ The same is affirmed by Saint John Chrysostom,§ Saint Augus-

* "Sed hunc mœrorem alia prorsus lætitia subsecuta est, apparitio videlicet stellæ et adoratio Magorum."—"Another joy followed this grief, even the apparition of the star, and the adoration of the Wise Men." (St. John Chrysostom, *Homil.* 8 *in Matth.*)

† "Intrantes domum.—Puta Stabulum; Hebræi enim omnem mansionem, seu receptaculum, etiam bestiarum, vocant domum. (Tirinus, *in Matt.* ii. 11.)

‡ "Et in præsepi ipsum posuerunt, ubi venientes ex Arabia Magi invenerunt eum."—"And they laid him in the manger, where the Wise Men coming from Arabia found him." (St. Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone.*)

§ St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. VI. in Matth.*

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tine,* Saint Jerome,† and by our holy mother, the Church, which, on the feast of the Epiphany, says that the star guided the Magi to the stable or manger of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem! of noblest cities
None can once with thee compare;
Thou alone the Lord from Heaven
Didst for us incarnate bear.

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* Magos stella direxit—adoratus in præsepi."—"He was adored in the manger by the Wise Men." (St. Augustine, *in Ps.* xliv. 3.)

† "Ecce in hoc parvo terræ foramine cœlorum conditor natus est . . . hic demonstratus a stella, hic adoratus a Magis."—"Here, in this little hole of earth, the creator of the heavens was born . . . here he was pointed out by the star, here adored by the Wise Men." (St. Jerome, Epist. 17, 18, *ad Marcellam.*)

The Gospel calls the three happy Oriental sovereigns Magi, because coming to the knowledge of the new-born God, guided by the light of a star, they seemed rather astrologers or philosophers than princes. "Quos tamen maluit (Scriptura) Magos vocare, quia Christum ex stella agnoscere sapientum erat non Principum." (Tirinus, *in Luc.* i. 3.)

The word Magi, whereby the Hellenistic Jews styled foreign philosophers, was honorable, and meant astronomers or philosophers; but when those Wise Men, abusing their science, gave themselves to vain and superstitious observances, the once honorable appellation became ignominious and opprobrious. (See Tirinus, *in Luc.* ii. 10.)

Cæsar Calinus (Tom. IV. Lib. III. cap. 5), following St. Epiphanius (Tom. I. adv. Hæreses. Hæres. 20), places the adoration of the Wise Men at the beginning of the second year after the birth of Christ; but Anthony Sandinus esteems more reconcileable to Scripture the opinion of those who say, that the Wise Men arrived on the twelfth day after the birth of the Infant God. "Magos Bethleemum venisse (probo) postridie nonas Januarii, hoc est, die tertio decimo post Christum natum. Id enim et Matthæus indicasse videtur illis verbis: 'Cum natus *esset Jesus, ecce Magi,*' quod *ecce* de re proxima et quasi præsenti dici solet, et Ecclesia jamdiu hoc traditum a majoribus conservaverit, ut docet S. Augustinus in sermone 103, de Epiphania 5. cap. 1. et D. Thomas 3. p. q. 36. art. 6. Neque ulla obstat longinquitas loci: nam ita ex Arabia felici Hierosolymam intra dies octo camelorum opera confici posse, tradit Petrus de Marca in libello de Adventu Magorum ad Christum, qui extat inter opuscula ejus posthuma a Stephano Baluzio edita. (Sandinus, *De Christo, cap.* 3. § 10.)

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Fairer than the sun of morning,
  Was the star that told his birth;
To the lands their God announcing,
  Hid beneath a form of earth.

By its lambent beauty guided,
  See, the Eastern kings appear;
See them bend their gifts to offer,—
  Gifts of incense, gold and myrrh.*

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* O sola magnarum urbium
  Major Bethlem, cui contigit
Ducem salutis cœlitus
  Incorporatum gignere.

Quem stella, quæ solis rotam
  Vincit decore ac lumine
Venisse terris nuntiat
  Cum carne terrestri Deum.

Videre postquam illum Magi,
  Eoa promunt munera;
Stratique votis offerunt
  Thus, myrrham et aurum regium.

Hymn for Lauds, on Twelfth Day.





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CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.



FROM the stable of Bethlehem, or if we believe the conjectures of some writers,* from a house in the city, to which the Holy Family removed after the adoration of the Wise Men, Joseph and Mary proceeded with the Infant God to present him in the temple, which was nine miles distant from Bethlehem. This took place, as Saint Luke tells us,† when the period of forty days had elapsed, after which, by the law of Moses, the mother had to purify herself, and the parents offer the child to the Lord. There is then no

* TIRINUS, *in Matth.* ii. 11.

† And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. (Luke ii 29.) From which words, says Suarez (*Tom.* 2 *in* 3 *p. disp.* 16. *in principio*), and the laws (Exod. xiii. Levit. xii.), it appears that this was done the fortieth day after the birth of the Lord, as also Ecclesiastic tradition has it.

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SIMEON PRESENTING JESUS.

Simeon also took Him into his arms and Blessed God. Luke II 28.

James B. Kirker
New York

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ground for the opinion * that Saint Joseph, warned by an angel to fly into Egypt immediately after the departure of the Wise Men, was compelled to defer the purification of the mother and the offering of the Infant God, for a more seasonable opportunity. They accomplished the presentation of Jesus, offering to the Lord the victims prescribed by the law, which were two turtle doves or two pigeons. This was the offering of the poor; but Joseph and Mary presented it, not so much from their want of means, as from love of voluntary poverty, which the Man-God came to teach. The parents entered the temple, the Blessed Virgin bearing the Infant God in her arms, as far as that part of the porch appointed for the consecration of the first-born. There they offered Jesus to His Eternal Father, in the sight of the ministers of the altar, and then was this jewel, the most precious that existed in the world, redeemed that very day for five sicles, that is, with two and a half ounces of silver.†

Maldonado tells us, that some grave authors imagine that Mary offered two turtle doves and two pigeons,‡ which was doing more than the law required. The ground for their opinion is, that the Evangelist,§ relating the different kinds of birds, wishes to show that the oblation was of both. Origen,‖ or the author of the homilies on the Gospel of

* Trombelli in his *Life of the Blessed Virgin, Diss.* xxii. *Quæst.* 1. 2, cites the authors of this opinion.

† The sicle is valued at 63 cents.

‡ Graves auctores lego, qui existimare videantur, Mariam simul duos turtures et duos pullos columbarum obtulisse; quod utrumque videatur Evangelista conjungere. Ita, ni fallor, Origenes, Hom. 14, Ambrose, Lib. II. de Abraham Patriarcha, cap. viii. (MALDONADO, in Luke ii. 24.)

§ Et ut darent hostiam, secundum quod dictum est in lege Domini, par turturum aut duos pullos columbarum. (Luke ii. 24.)

‖ Turturum par et duos pullos columbarum pro Salvatore videmus oblatos . . .

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Saint Luke, adds to his opinion a prodigious circumstance that does not please the erudite; it is, that the turtle doves offered were not such as we see with our eyes, but sovereign spirits who came down from heaven under the figure of these birds, that in the new presentation of the Virgin's Son all might be new. Father Cæsar Calinus,* treating of this subject, writes as follows: "Those who were purified were not at liberty to offer turtle doves or pigeons in place of the lamb, nor did any excuse but necessity prevail. They were obliged to seek a lamb, and when their endeavors proved fruitless, then only was the substitution of doves or pigeons permitted. Mary and Joseph were not rich, and their ready means had been consumed in their journey, and forty days' stay at Bethlehem: hence they offered the victims of the poor." Others add, that the parents of Jesus did not offer a lamb, because the spotless lamb whom they offered in the person of their Son, was the victim to take away the sins of the world. "Whether they offered doves or pigeons," says Calinus, "the Evangelist does not state, merely informing us, that they made the offering according to the law. He tells what may edify us, and passes over in silence what would merely gratify curiosity, easy as it was to know what kind of bird was offered, by merely asking the Blessed Virgin, whom Saint Luke must repeatedly have had the honor and consolation of consulting. They probably offered doves, because this bird is more easily found there than pigeons, and was the more usual victim on such occasions. Hence we

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Sicut nova fuit generatio Salvationis non ex viro et muliere, sed ex sola tantum Virgine; sic et par turturum, et duo pulli columbarum non fuerunt tales, quales oculis carnis aspicimus, sed qualis Spiritus Sanctus in specie columbæ descendit. (ORIGEN, *Hom. XIV. in Luc.*)

* CALINUS, *in Evangelia, Tom. IV. Lib. III. ch. 4.*

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read in the Gospel of those who sold doves, but no mention is made of the sellers of pigeons in the temple."

As Joseph and Mary entered the temple with the child, the holy old man, Simeon, came forward to greet them. According to Cedrenus,* Simeon was one of the seventy interpreters sent by the high priest Eleazar, to Egypt, at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus, in order to translate the Holy Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek. Be this as it may, Simeon had for years dwelt in Jerusalem, a just and God-fearing man, occupied with the fulfilment of the law amid a multitude of Jews, who, deceived by false traditions, looked for a warlike Messias to come and free them from the shameful yoke of foreign nations, and thus restore the temporal rule of Juda. Some aver that Simeon was a priest,† appointed to present the first-born to God, and to restore them to their parents when they had been redeemed at the price prescribed by the law. This opinion, however, receives no confirmation from the words of the sacred historians, and it is incredible

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* Cedrenus, who flourished in the middle of the eleventh century, in his compendium of History, says: Simeon, the Jew, the Receiver of God, was one of the seventy interpreters, &c., as Chrysostom says in his Hexæmeron. This work of St. John, so far as I know, is no longer extant, to enable us to see whether that was really his opinion. Nevertheless, as the Saint (*Hom. V. in Matth.*) says that the translation was made more than a century before Our Lord's coming, it can scarcely be that any one of the elders selected by Eleazar, and sent to Philadelphus, could have survived. The dates assigned by more recent and accurate chronologists, show that this is still more incredible. According to these, the Septuagint was begun in the year of the world 3727, 279 years before Christ. (SANDINUS, *De Christo, D. cap.* iv.)

† Nonnulli sacerdotem fuisse autumant, cujus proinde muneris fuerit, puerum tanquam primorem natu Domino sistere, atque post acceptum pretium legale, parentibus restituere. (*Vide* BARONIUS, Anno. Ch. 1. § 50.) Many of the ancients adopt this opinion; others, and not rashly, deny it. I say not rashly, for the silence of Scripture is a strong argument in their favor. (CALMET, *Dictionnaire de la Bible.* verbo *Simeon,*)

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that they would have neglected the priestly dignity of so distinguished an Israelite. The fact is, that this happy man, full of faith and heavenly light, expected the Redeemer of his people, and had received in confirmation of his hopes an answer from heaven, from the Holy Ghost, promising that he should not die without beholding the Comforter of the nation.* This faithful Israelite, to fulfil the promise of the Holy Ghost, came to the temple guided by an impulse from on high, at the very hour and time when Joseph and Mary entered with the child. Although that sudden spectacle was of a nature to hold the holy old man in silent suspense, yet he approached the Holy Family, availing himself, with the greatest respect and veneration, of that kind of authority which age in such cases gives; or rather, inspired from on high, he took the child in his arms, and blessing the Almighty aloud, he burst forth into these sublime expressions:

"Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy words, in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation."—I have beheld the Messias promised and so anxiously expected.—"A light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel." Mary and Joseph, on hearing these sentiments of that enlightened intellect, were filled with admiration as much as if what that good Israelite declared was new and startling. Euthymius † says that Mary and Joseph wondered to hear Simeon's words, because they disclosed more lofty things than were told by the shepherds, or even by those Wise Men who came from Arabia to adore the King of the Jews. Maldonado, interpreting Saint Luke, deems it more probable that Joseph and Mary at that moment

* And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. (Luke ii. 26.)

† Euthymius, *apud Maldonatum, in Luc.* xi. 23.

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called to mind all that had passed, and comparing it with what the holy Simeon said, found new cause for wonder. "Unless," adds Maldonado,* "we suppose their admiration excited at hearing so clearly declared by a stranger what they knew from the birth of the Infant God.

When Simeon restored Jesus, whom he had held in his arms, he blessed the holy parents,† that is, he congratulated them on their happiness in having such a son to present.‡ Then turning to Mary, as one appointed to prepare her for the passion and death of Jesus, he uttered this prophecy: "Behold this child—this Saviour whom thou hast given to the world, is sent for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel. A most fatal day shall come for Jerusalem, when this child shall be sentenced to a most ignominious death; and the execution of this sentence, cruel beyond the power of imagination, shall be, O Mary! a sword to pierce thy soul."

Commentators on Scripture remark, that the holy seer turned to the Blessed Virgin, and not to Joseph, when he announced the passion and death of Jesus, and explain it in two ways. Theophylact says that this faithful Israelite showed by this action, that Mary was the true mother and Joseph only putative father of Jesus. Others§ conjecture that the holy old man, who had just without distinction congratulated both, now addressed his mournful prophecy to Mary, and not to Joseph, because that holy patriarch, as he

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* MALDONADO, in Luc. xi.

† And Simeon blessed them, (Mary and Joseph.) Luke ii. 34.

‡ He congratulated them on their happy issue; he called them blessed in having such a son. (MALDONADO, in Luc. ii. 35.)

§ The reason was, I think, that it concerned Mary, not Joseph; for the sword was to pierce not the soul of Joseph, who did not live till Christ's death, but the soul of Mary. (MALDONATUS, *in Luke* ii. 35.)



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knew, was to depart this life before the passion and death of the Man-God.

Celsus, an ancient author, speaking of the remarkable events of that day, in which, after the purification of the Mother in conformity to the law, the Son was presented in the temple, says, that the venerable Saint Simeon on receiving the Infant God in his arms recovered his sight, which he had in a manner lost. Leo Allatius states, that the aged saint perceiving the Blessed Virgin suddenly environed with light, broke through the crowd, and approaching her, took the child in his arms. Nicephorus relates, that Saint Simeon expired after restoring the child to its mother. "The learned, however," says the critical Calmet, "know what credit can be given to traditions of this kind." * These authors add, that as Saint Simeon was one day endeavoring to fathom the prophecy of Isaias: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son," he failed to understand the mystery, whereupon it was revealed to him that he should not die before the oracle was fulfilled. But we will leave these writers, and the accounts which their fancy has inspired, to follow surer paths.

When all the ceremonies of the law were completed in the temple of the Most High, the holy patriarch, bidding adieu to Simeon and Anna, left Jerusalem for his home in Nazareth, accompanied by Jesus and Mary; † but desiring to venerate that grotto where the Infant God had been born, or to take leave of his relatives and acquaintances, he once more proceeded to Bethlehem, the cradle of the house of David. St. Joseph seems, indeed, to have reached that city, and while

* See CALMET, *Dictionary of the Bible*, verbo *Simeon*.

† And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, into their city Nazareth. (Luke ii. 39.)

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tarrying there, as some writers allege,* Saint Joseph was suddenly warned by an order from heaven communicated by an angel, to fly to Egypt, instead of proceeding to his beloved home in Nazareth, to which he was indeed destined to be a stranger for years. Of this vision, and the flight consequent upon it, we shall treat in the following chapter.

* Tillemont, *Life of Christ*, Notes 8 & 9. Trombelli, *Life of St. Joseph*, Part. I. ch. 27. numb. 6.



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CHAPTER IX.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.—SAINT JOSEPH AT THE COMMAND OF THE ANGEL FLIES INTO EGYPT—THE LENGTH OF HIS STAY—THE PLACE OF HIS ABODE.

AS soon as Herod, surnamed the Great, saw that the Wise Men, from whom he hoped to obtain information as to the birth of the long-expected infant, heir of the crown of Judea, had returned to Arabia without repassing through Jerusalem, he was convinced that the King of the Jews whom they sought, was really born. Accordingly with the design of protecting his own rights to the throne, he issued one of the most cruel orders that the world has ever witnessed. So far did his bloody mandate go, that he ordered the murder of every child born in Bethlehem of Juda, and its neighborhood, during the last two years; supposing that the child styled King of the Jews might have been born some time before the apparition of the star which guided the Wise Men. The decree in its execution reached

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the other innocents ; but Heaven, delivering Jesus from the monarch's sword, baffled his cruel intentions by an adorable Providence. While Joseph, the guardian and reputed father of the Infant God slept, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, and a heavenly messenger, after revealing to him the jealousy and the plots of the sovereign of Judea, bade Joseph fly to Egypt with the Child and its Mother.

Saint Matthew,* passing over in silence the presentation of Jesus in the temple, connects in the words and order of his narrative, the departure of the Wise Men with the apparition of the angel who bade Saint Joseph flee into the land of Egypt. Hence some historians † suppose that the Wise Men adored the Messias, when the Holy Family, returning from Jerusalem, stopped at Bethlehem before setting out for their home at Nazareth. For our part, following some ancient Fathers and theologians, we say that the Wise Men came to Bethlehem before Saint Joseph left that city to fulfil the law of God by presenting the Infant God in the temple.

The particle *Behold*, used by the Evangelist to unite the two events of the departing of the Wise Men and the appearance of the angel, does not rigorously signify a proximity of the two facts ; it only means that the angel appeared after the departure of the Wise Men, although after a lapse of some days, which being so few, do not prevent the continuation of the history, nor the force of a word which unites several incidents belonging to various times. Writers debate the matter on both sides. It is, however, beyond controversy that Saint Joseph, without waiting for the day to dawn, or

* And after they were departed, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. (Matt. ii. 1)

† Cæsar Calinus, Tom. IV. Lib. III. cap. 5.—St. Epiphanius, *Hæres.* 20.



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raising objections, or consulting the angel as to points which could not but rise to the mind of one about leaving his native land and undertaking a long journey, without even asking the period he was to spend in that exile, made no demonstration, except of obedience to the orders of Heaven—an obedience * which Saint John Chrysostom applauds with magnificent expressions.† On the very night of the warning he left Bethlehem for Egypt, and remained in that kingdom till, on the death of the persecutor, God called his Son from Egypt. Calinus adds, that by the flight of Saint Joseph and his family, the Almighty wished to teach mortals that withdrawal is laudable in such persecutions, if he who flees reserves himself for enterprises of God's glory; for we cannot expect miracles, when the events can be attained by human providence.‡

The motives which may have influenced Heaven in ordering St. Joseph to fly to Egypt, and not elsewhere, are not all given in the Gospel; but so far as it is permitted to men to give any reason for Divine Providence, we may conjecture that he fled to Egypt, and not to other countries bordering Judea, because the Ammonites, the Moabites and Philistines, who were the inhabitants of those parts, although in peace with the Hebrews, nevertheless hated them, which was not the case in Egypt, where the Jews were then treated with affection and regard.

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* "Who arose and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt, and he was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled, which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: *Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*" (Osee xi. 2.) Matt. ii. 14.

† For Joseph was a faithful man, nor did he ask the time of his return, &c. But he is not slothful, but obeys, and bears all temptations with joy. (St John Chrysostom, *Hom. VIII. in Matth.*)

‡ Calinus *Tom. IV. Lib. III. cap. 7.*

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If the journey to Egypt was undertaken by land, Saint Joseph left Bethlehem by the city of Gaza, which was at the entrance of the land of Canaan, and from Gaza he took the road to the desert, where he had to travel seventy leagues; of which, as Virgil Sedelmayr * and Avila write, only twenty are inhabited, and passing the desert he entered Cairan, now called Matarea, and there, according to some, the Holy Family remained. This town of Matarea lay four leagues from the celebrated city of Memphis.

This journey by land seems most probable and conformable to the station of the family, and the rare prudence of Saint Joseph, who had been chosen to console Mary and Jesus in this hardship. If the voyage was made almost entirely by sea, as some writers set forth (deeming it more suited to the family, and shorter with a favorable wind), Saint Joseph must have travelled on land as far as the port of Joppe or Jaffa, about forty miles from Bethlehem, and there embarked, sailing for Damietta, at which port he arrived safely; and from Damietta procceded to Old Cairo, the ancient Babylon of the Egyptians. There, according to common tradition, the Holy Family remained, until they returned from Egypt to the land of Israel. Whoever knows by experience that the sea is not as calm as it is painted in the sweet retirement of their closets, by those who have never ventured on it, will not easily be induced to believe that Saint Joseph, a man highly enlightened, chosen by God as the guardian of His most precious jewels, would have exposed the new-born Infant Jesus to the discomforts of a

* As Avila notes, the route by land from Judea to Egypt is almost all through a desert, reckoning from the city of Gaza in the land of Chanaan, to the city of Cairo in Egypt; in all this distance only about twenty leagues are arable or fit for habitation, the rest of the way, some fifty leagues, being a perfect wilderness. (SEDELMAYR, *Theologia Mariana.* 1250.)

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ship, and the risk and perils of the sea, which even poets,* who soothe dangers in harmonious verse, confess to exceed all others to which men expose themselves. I shall conclude this chapter, by the exact account which the Reverend Father Daniel Mary de Novi, an Observantine Franciscan, long missionary in Egypt and Syria, and subsequently professor of Arabic in the University of Bologna, gave Father Trombelli.† That esteemed author inserts it in his life of Saint Joseph, in order that his readers, by this faithful account, may form a better opinion of the nature and circumstances of the flight into Egypt. For the same reason, I too transfer it to these pages.

"When the Blessed Virgin left Bethlehem for Egypt, if she proceeded to that kingdom by sea, she must first have travelled by land to Joppe or Jaffa, some forty miles distant, and from Joppe by sea to Damietta, from Damietta to Old Cairo, where some think she stopped. If our Lady went by land, she passed through the desert, and stopped at Matarea, where there is a country of great extent, with a well of good water, and a tree which has bent to the earth, since the day when, according to the popular tradition, it paid homage to the Infant God as he passed. Matarea is twelve miles from Memphis. But we may remark, that the Blessed Virgin might have been in all these places, going to Egypt by sea, and returning to Israel by land; or, on the contrary, going by land and returning by water."

Whichever way they went, the voyage required several

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* O fortunate, nescis quid mali
Præterieris, qui nunquam es ingressus mare.
Nam ut alias omittam miserias, unam hanc vide;
Dies triginta, aut plus eo in navi fui.

TERENCE, Hec. Act. III. Sc. 4.

† TROMBELLI, Cap. xxiii n. 4. 5.

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days to complete it. A long journey, even when undertaken with great preparations and all the conveniences which lighten the way, is a continued trouble. No one then can doubt but that Saint Joseph and the Holy Family had much to suffer on their march through the desert, or voyage by sea. But I have already said with Saint John Chrysostom, that he bore all adversities with constancy and joy, in the very midst of them, and as we must piously believe, giving at the same time, thanks to Heaven for the loving providence wherewith it watched over the life of Jesus, and the redemption of the human race, whose salvation would have remained, as Saint Peter Chrysologus expresses it,* buried in its ancient ruins, left remediless by the premature death of its future Liberator, who was to redeem it by dying on a cross, after having instructed men in the maxims of the New Testament,† as we infer from a text of Saint Paul.

Egypt is a vast country, then studded with great towns and cities, which it is not, however, my province to describe, as my only duty is to inquire what was the place in which the Holy Family abode while they dwelt in that kingdom.

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* "Hinc est, quod Christus fugit, ut cedat tempori non Herodi; non fugit propter autoris mortem, sed fugit propter sæculi vitam, nam qui mori venerat, quare fugeret mortem? Christus totam causam nostræ salutis occideret, si se parvulum permisisset occidi."—"Christ fled, to yield to the time, not to Herod; he did not fly on account of the death of the author, but he fled for the life of the world, for why should he fly death, who came to die? Christ would have slain the whole cause of our salvation, had he permitted himself to be slain in infancy." (St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 151. *de fuga Christi in Ægyptum.*)

† Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross. (Coloss. ii. 14.)

The journey from Egypt to Judea, or the Land of Promise, took the Israelites forty years, not from the length of the way, but from the special providence by which the Almighty directed the march of his people through the desert. (Sedelmayr, 2. 4. *art.* 2. *num.* 1251.)

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The Holy Gospels do not mention the place of their residence, and we must therefore speak from conjecture and the traditions of the East as to the precise spot. Nothing more can be required of a historian, in the absence of authentic documents. Those who blindly believe the fabulous book of the Infancy of Jesus, composed by some writer of little judgment and no critical acumen, say that Saint Joseph journeyed extensively through the provinces of Egypt, as though the Saint was one of those curious travellers, who, with no motive but to see what is rare and ancient, travel around the world, leaving no city or kingdom unscrutinized by their eyes or undescribed by their pens.

John Baptist Mantuan, does not allow so much space to the travels of Saint Joseph, for, albeit more given to the fictions and fables of heathen poets than the truth which inspired a Paulinus, a Prudentius and other Christian poets, —his muse, contenting itself with the affirmation that after having been in Thebes, a city famous for its hundred gates, and its admirable gardens, in Hermopolis, in Pharos, and the provinces on the Libyan border, he took up his abode in Memphis, on the banks of the Nile, which was afterwards called Babylon, and finally Cairo, a city in past times renowned for its wonderful pyramids and its millions of inhabitants. Saint Joseph settled in that capital and near the court of the sovereign of Egypt, says the poet, because he found there a friend, a patrician of Nazareth, who, like a generous countryman, received him into his house, where the Holy Patriarch supported his family by the exercise of his trade.* Had not this Carmelite poet loved fiction and heathen mythology so much, his opinion might pass as probable with critics and with the refined taste of this enlight-

* JOANNES BAPTISTA MANTUANUS, *Parthen.* Lib. III.

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ened century, which rejects such proofs when the facts of ancient times are examined in history.

The pen of Don Antonio Mendoza, following the flights of Mantuan's free fancy, sets forth his opinion in verses which display his poetic genius, but give no evidence of historic accuracy.* Saint Thomas,† on whom we may more safely rely than on the poets, says that it was, in his time, the common opinion that Saint Joseph abode in Heliopolis, seven miles from Memphis. Heliopolis took its name of City of the sun, from an image of that planet venerated there, and from a temple consecrated to the same luminary by the idolatry of that superstitious nation. Its inhabitants were esteemed the most learned of that kingdom. The Greeks gave another name to this city and to the neighboring province, which we call Thebais, and which borders on Ethiopia.

Suarez ‡ cites Saint Anselm in favor of this opinion, and it seems very probable that Saint Joseph should have abode at Heliopolis, as many Jews dwelt in that city, where they had a magnificent temple, built by Onias, with the permission of Ptolemy Philometer, a prince who looked with a kindly

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* Si ahora, ahora sus campos
ven á Dios del hombre huyendo
al sagrado de lo estraño,
á vecindad de un desierto;
Dichosa Menfis mas alta
ya por los tres forasteros,
que por las altas memorias
de sus vanos Tolomeos.

† "Dicitur quod septem annos fuit ibi et habitavit in civitate Heliopoli."—"Joseph is said to have been there seven years, and to have dwelt in the city of Heliopolis. (St. Thomas, in Matth. ii.)

‡ Suarez, Tom. II. in 3 part. disp. 17. § 2. It must be observed, however, that the commentaries on St. Matthew, attributed to St. Anselm, are now ascribed to a later hand.

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eye on the Hebrews in Egypt, the descendants of the thousands swept into captivity by Ptolemy Lagus, the son of Soter. This last prince, as is well known, gave the Egyptian kings the name of Ptolemy, which afterwards became as synonymous with majesty as Pharaoh had been. Anthony Sandinus, indulging in the same mode of reasoning, says, that it is likely too, that the Holy Family resided in Alexandria,* where the Jews had a flourishing synagogue. They might thus be at once concealed and assisted by their countrymen, as it was a large city, twenty leagues in circumference, and was a port much frequented by strangers.

Finally, it is considered most certain that Saint Joseph dwelt at Hermopolis, a city of Thebais, situated between Heliopolis and Babylon of Egypt. This is the opinion of Bochart,† who, describing these countries most exactly, says: "It is a tradition that the Blessed Virgin, with Jesus and her spouse Joseph, after their flight from Judea, dwelt in Hermopolis, a city of Thebais, between Heliopolis and Babylon. There is in this city a garden with a fountain, in which the Blessed Virgin is said to have bathed the Infant Jesus, and the spot is accordingly venerated, not only by Christians, but also by infidels. Father Abad, our Mexican poet, no less elegant than pious, adopts the same opinion.‡

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* If there is any room for conjecture, Joseph, it would seem, retired to Alexandria. (SANDINUS, *de Christo, cap.* 4. § 6.)

† BOCHART, *Hist. Tripart. cap.* 4.

‡ Interea fuge, chare Puer, fuge, Regia Virgo,
Inque sinu abscondens puerum, pluviæ inscia regna,
Hermopolimque pete.
ABAD, *Heroica de Deo. Carmen. XXI. v.* 90.

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CHAPTER X.

THE LENGTH OF ST. JOSEPH'S STAY IN EGYPT.—HIS MODE OF LIFE THERE.—HIS RETURN TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL WITH HIS FAMILY ON HEROD'S DEATH.

HAVING treated of the place in which the Holy Family abode in that land of absurd paganism, where their ancestors had so long groaned in bondage, it now remains to consider the length of their stay. It is evident from Saint Luke's * gospel that Saint Joseph left Egypt before Our Lord attained his twelfth year, but we cannot positively aver

* When he was twelve years old, they going up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem. (Luke ii. 41–3.)

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in what year before that event their return took place. Historians are divided in their opinions, and each one fixes the year of the return according to the chronology which he follows as to the time of King Herod's reign. The celebrated poet Jerome Vida,* who flourished in the early part of the sixteenth century, writes that Saint Joseph did not stay long in Egypt: Sandinus thinks that he did not remain a year in exile, and endeavors to prove it in this way: Joseph remained in Egypt till the death of Herod, as St. Matthew states in his gospel: † now Herod died in the year 750 after the foundation of Rome, before the fourth of the vulgar era, at the end of March or beginning of April, as Count Camillus de Silvestris in his chronology shows from Josephus: ‡ Christ having been born, as this most learned man shows, on the 25th of December, in the year of Rome 748, and Joseph having been at Jerusalem with his spouse and the Infant Jesus on the second of February in the following year, to obey the law of Purification and Presentation, it follows,§ that the Saint was in Egypt about a year." Saint Epiphanius, whose computation is a year more than Sandinus's, thinks that Saint Joseph was two years in Egypt; ‖ Nicephorus affirms that it was three years; ¶ Tirinus proposes his opinion

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* Neo tamen ille diu scelere est lætatus in illo:
Nam membra immundo correptus tabida morbo,
Illaudatam animam parvo post tempore fudit:
Ipse iterum in somnis divina voce coactus
Linquere monstriferi septemflua flumina Nili,
In patriam redeo.

VIDA, *Christiado, III. v. 989.*

† Matt. ii. xv.

‡ Conde Camillo. Part. I. Dissert. 3.

§ SANDINUS, *De Christo*, Cap. IV. § 9.

‖ Unde rursus post biennium, mortuo Herode, ac succedente Archelau, revertitur. (EPIPHANIUS, Tom I. Hæres. xx, § 10.)

¶ NICEPHORUS, Lib. I. cap. 4.

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in these terms worthy of his vast erudition : "On the seventh of January, in the third year of the life of Jesus, in the Julian year 44, at the warning of the angel, Joseph returns from Egypt to the land of Israel, as almost all the ancient martyrologies and modern chronologists affirm."* Trombelli, evidently inclining to the opinion of those who assign at most a year and two months to the residence of the Holy Family in exile, says that most of the moderns pretend that Saint Joseph remained in the land of the Ptolemies, at most twelve or fourteen months. Their argument is as follows : Herod, according to the most probable, not to say certain, opinion, died soon after the bloody execution and slaughter committed on the Holy Innocents ; and almost simultaneously, as the Gospel of Saint Matthew seems to convey, an Angel appears to Saint Joseph, commanding him to leave Egypt and return to the land of Israel. I do not mean to say that the very moment that Herod departed from this world the angel appeared to Saint Joseph, nor do I believe that by the others who sought the death of the Infant God, was meant Antipater, whom Herod his father, just before he died, ordered to be put to death ; but rather following the opinion of Saint Jerome, I affirm that those who with the monarch of Judea sought the life of Jesus, were the priests and doctors of the law, who, as accomplices of the tyrant, died shortly after him. I do not venture to decide absolutely how many months the Holy Family remained in Egypt : I should prefer to adopt the opinion of those moderns, who make their stay in that Kingdom fourteen months at most, but I am withheld by the authority of the ancients, our masters, who teach us that "their residence in Egypt was a long one." † Saint Thomas

* Jacobus Tirinus, *in Chronico Sacro*, cap. xlix.
† Trombelli, *Life of St. Joseph*, *Part. I. ch.* xxiv. *num.* 2.



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puts down seven years for the period of their exile.* The eminent Cardinal Baronius says,† that the return from Egypt, which the Church in all her martyrologies names on the seventh of January, took place as Christ was entering on his ninth year; because the death of Herod, which was the appointed time for that return, took place in the previous year. The reign of this prince must not be counted by the Chronology of Josephus, Eusebius, and some who with them pretend that the Holy Family, giving them the longest possible period of absence from the land of Israel, was four years in Egypt; but by the 182d Olympiad, in which Cæsar Augustus, triumphing over Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, confirmed Herod in his Kingdom. His reign then must be counted from the victory of Actium, and not from the previous years; as during them Herod was off the throne, either set aside by Antigonus, or deprived of it by Augustus for his adherence to Mark Anthony. Pagi,‡ the annotator of Baronius, censures this opinion; but Father Suarez,§ first noting that not even Benedict Pereira, an excellent chronologist, succeeded in determining the period of Saint Joseph's stay in Egypt, says that he deems Cardinal Baronius's opinion quite probable; and accordingly sets down his return from Egypt when Jesus entered on his ninth year.

But how, it will be asked, did Joseph support himself in Egypt during that long stay? He entered that country, when its glory was dimmed and its brilliant fortune turned away; he entered it when it was divided into provinces, all

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* Dicitur, quod septem annis fuit ibi, et habitavit in civitate Heliopolis. He is said to have been there seven years, and to have resided at Heliopolis. (St. Thomas, in Matt. ii.)

† Baronius, *Ad annum Christi.* 8. *num.* 3.

‡ Pagi, *Ann. ad annum Christi.* 8, *Cæsaris Baronii.*

§ Suarez, *Tom. II. in* 3 *Part. Disp.* 17. § 2.

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subjected to the head of the world by the glorious victory of Octavius Augustus over Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. The memoirs of those times do not tell us what kind of life Saint Joseph led among the Egyptians, nor the marks of humanity with which these people received the stranger. Hence the writers of the life of the most holy patriarch, finding themselves destitute of any authentic accounts, conjecture it, and describe, sometimes by the amiable disposition, and sometimes by the common name of Just, by which the Holy Ghost describes him in the gospel, and sometimes too by the fortune of that other Joseph, who came into the world as a figure of the foster-father of Jesus. That Joseph's history the sacred annals give us. In Egypt, the glorious stage of his virtue, he conciliated the love of the nation by his kind and affable demeanor. If the Egyptians were so influenced by the engaging manners and great merits of him who in his gifts was but a figure, it is probable that they outdid themselves in manifesting their civility and affection, when they had the fortune to see the original, whose advantages were so far superior. The Saint being then, it is presumed, so well received, it is credible that he availed himself of this reception to show the Egyptians the falsity of those extravagant idols which they adored. Gerson, whose words I shall cite elsewhere, writes that Saint Joseph, while in Egypt, disputed learnedly on points of faith with the elders of the city of Tanis, where in past times occurred those renowned events between Moses and the sovereign of that kingdom, which in consequence of the misconduct of its prince suffered the most sensible calamities. The opinion of Gerson is unsupported by well-founded traditions, nor does this theologian adduce any authority to support this passage in the life of Saint Joseph.

Some, who do not think as Gerson does, attribute to Saint Joseph in Egypt the miseries of poverty to such a degree, that

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he was, according to them, obliged to beg for his support; but this is regarded as the revery of pious souls, who endeavor by such incentives to quicken their contemplation and affective acts. This poverty, says the illustrious Francis Suarez,* was unbecoming the head of the Holy Family. It is certain that Saint Joseph was not a man of great means; on the contrary, what the world calls fortune, was as rare with the holy Patriarch, as nature showed herself prodigal, adorning him with her fairest qualities. Hence he was obliged to supply the want of riches by industry and the trade of a carpenter, thus conforming to the maxim of his forefather Solomon,† where the wise man asks an income constituting neither poverty nor wealth. It is supposed that the foster-father of Jesus, by a special providence of heaven, reserved some part of the gifts offered at their adoration by the Wise Men, in order to pay the expenses of the journey to Egypt and support him for some years among strangers. This supposes that the Wise Men acted as princes of those countries, where the sun by its influence seems to communicate generosity and magnanimity. But even supposing that Saint Joseph had not this assistance, from the fact that the Wise Men in their gifts meant to show gratitude merely, and not generosity,

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* SUAREZ, Tom. II. Part. III. Disp. sect. 3.

† Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life. (Proverbs xxx. 8.)

Joseph and the Mother of God, his most holy spouse, owned not only a house at Nazareth, but also some goods and possessions, as well there as in Bethlehem, according to Nicephorus, in his history (*Book III. ch.* iv.) Cardinal Peter d'Ailly, called also the Cardinal of Cambray or Camaracensis, does not mention these goods of fortune, but he affirms that history is silent as to the fact of Mary and Joseph's ever soliciting alms. Credimus Mariam et Joseph pauperes fuisse: non tamen legimus eos aliquando mendicasse. See *Acta Bollandiana vindicata*, p. 689, where proofs in support of Nicephorus and the Cardinal of Cambray are adduced.

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Saint Joseph must have earned by his trade enough to support his family honorably and decently.

Saint Joseph was, on the other hand, more fortunate than other persons drawn from the pinchings of poverty for the honors of a throne ; for in Egypt where he supported himself by honest toil, he had the consolation of seeing the partial ruin of idolatry caused by the Infant God. I say partial, because the best theologians and critics * do not admit every prodigy given by some writers who believe all that is written in old books, justly treated by the learned as apocryphal, and accordingly devoid of all authority.

Whatever opinion we may form as to the period of the Holy Family's stay in Egypt, or their condition there, we know that at last the motives ceased which the angel had assigned, when he bade Saint Joseph retire with the Infant God and his mother from the States of Judea. "Fly, for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him." That tyrant having expired, and his death having suspended the sacrilegious pretensions of his ministers and creatures, there was no longer any need of Saint Joseph's remaining in Egypt with his family. This saint and Mary his spouse had already given most striking proofs of their obedience and promptitude in executing the decrees of heaven : already had the excellence and sovereign dignity of the Infant God been manifested in Egypt, and already had the sons of Egypt beheld with admiration the virtues and exemplary life of his parents, and heard their holy conversation, which had enlightened those nations born in the densest

* "What are we to think of these miracles? says Sandinus (*de Christo. cap.* iv. § 8). The same as Francis Suarez (Tom. II. in 3 part. disp. 27), an author, whom I closely follow in all that relates to Christ and his Mother. He thinks it neither very probable that all the idols in Egypt fell, nor improbable that they fell in some city."

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shades of ignorance, and in the error of idolatry; they should therefore no longer remain in Egypt, so far from the temple and their native land. Hence, when the angel appeared to Saint Joseph, as the head, and in some sort the superior of the Holy Family, he ordered him to return to Israel. Joseph, listening rather to the command of the angel than the sweet incentive which an exile has to leave the place of his banishment, obeyed * without delay, and without asking the minister of the Lord for any instructions as to the difficulties which might arise in his fulfilment of that decree.

Joseph doubtless fulfilled all those compliments and ceremonies which courtesy by the right of polished nations requires among the well-bred, and after this left Hermopolis, the city of his abode, with the joy that fills an exile's heart on leaving the place of his exile; for that spot is ever mingled with bitter qualities that never accord with the sweet memory of our own land. Pleasure would in some sort alleviate and console them on the journey, which was long, as Hermopolis was four hundred miles from the land of Israel.

Vida † says that Saint Joseph returned to his native land by the same route which conducted his flight, but we know not whether he invents this mode of return as a poet, or chants it without departing from the harmony and laws of historic truth. Of the other events of the journey, nothing can be stated as certain, from the silence of those ages. We merely know with certainty that Saint Joseph reached the States of Judea. This Saint Matthew declares; ‡ but without noting

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* Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. (Matt. ii. 21.)

† In patriam redeo, atque memor vestigia retro
Observata legens puerum cum Matre reduco.

VIDA, *Christiade III.* 989.

‡ Matt. ii. 21.



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whether he entered by Gaza, or by the port of Joppe. Trombelli * thinks that he entered at the spot where Judea and Egypt are least distant, as in this way Saint Joseph's obedience would be more punctual and more exact, and the Holy Family would sooner breathe the beloved air of their native land. The same writer adds: "Saint Joseph doubtless entered after his return from Egypt to settle in that part of the inheritance of Israel, properly called Judea, and belonging to the tribe of Juda (although it embraced a part of the tribe of Benjamin), in which district lay Jerusalem, the capital city and ancient court of the kings, and actually the residence of the President of the Roman Empire appointed to keep the Jews in subjection. In this same city lived the high priest and the principal persons of the sacerdotal order, with the ministers destined to the service of the temple. Hence it is probable that Saint Joseph thought of settling in Jerusalem, or at some place in its vicinity, for the greater convenience of visiting the temple, and communicating with Zachary and Saint Elizabeth, persons of rare sanctity. For this reason it is supposed that his first idea was to settle in the city itself, and that he turned in that direction; but hearing that Cæsar had approved the will of Herod (who, subject to this approbation, had appointed as his heir and successor on the throne Archelaus, already in possession of the crown), he changed his first resolution,† fearing that the

* "The first place which Saint Joseph reached is told us neither by the Gospel, nor by tradition; it is, however, most probable that it was the town nearest Egypt, as thus he would obey more promptly, and have the pleasure of more quickly breathing his native air. Joseph doubtless intended to take up his abode in the part properly called Judea." (Trombelli, *Vita dio San Giuseppe*, *Parte Prima*, *cap.* 26, *num.* 3.)

† But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the room of Herod, his father, he was afraid to go thither. (Matt. ii. 22.)

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son might follow up the cruel designs and inherit the jealousy of his father. Joseph's fears, on hearing of the succession of Archelaus, and his doubt as to the course to be pursued, did not last long, so prompt was the providence wherewith Heaven was wont to console the foster-father of Jesus and most worthy spouse of Mary. Father Calinus * does not agree with Trombelli, unable, as he says, to convince his own mind that Saint Joseph would have thought of settling in Judea, when the angel expressly told him to return from Egypt to Israel. The saint indeed took the road to Judea; but he did so, it is believed, from the facility with which he could pass from Judea to Galilee, where his residence lay. To show that this conjecture is not out of the way, I will give briefly a topography or description of those parts. The royal highway from Egypt to Galilee passed through Gaza, crossing the river Besor, which runs below the village of Leben; so that to enter Galilee it was necessary either to cross all the country of the Philistines, or to pass through the tribe of Simeon, crossing almost all the kingdom of Juda. The first road was fatiguing, as it was traversed by many rivers, and ran along the sea coast, as well as from the fact that the inhabitants of that region were a people who, even in time of peace, hated the people of God. The second road was more practicable and more convenient, from its being more frequented, and running through the midst of Israel. We are therefore inclined to think that Saint Joseph chose this latter, and would by it have reached his home in Naza-

* CALINUS, *Tom. IV. Lib. III. cap. 7.*

The angel told Saint Joseph to return from Egypt to the land of Israel. The holy patriarch did not disobey the command of the Almighty, when as he returned he thought of entering Judea; for that kingdom, after the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, was considered a part of the land of Israel, as in the times of David and Solomon.

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reth without especial trouble, had not a fear of Archelaus arrested him. Learning that that prince occupied the throne of Judea, he went no further, but stopped, in doubt what course to pursue in this emergency. Troubled in mind, and revolving these doubts and cruel fears, Saint Joseph fell asleep, and in his dreams an angel of the Lord appeared,* telling him to turn back and retire to Galilee: Joseph obeyed, turning back towards Galilee, as the minister of God directed, and took up his abode in his former city of Nazareth.

Herod Antipas, a more humane prince than Archelaus, was tetrarch of Galilee.† He gave no indication of any intent to follow up his father's hatred and maxims, deeming as fabulous or silly reports of the vulgar, what had been circulated as to the birth of the new heir to the sceptre and crown of Judea. Saint Joseph, therefore, resolved to enter freely his beloved city of Nazareth‡ and remain there, as he possessed

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* And being warned in sleep, retired into the quarters of Galilee. (Matt. ii. 22.)

† On the death of Herod the Great, Archelaus, his son, was left his heir to the kingdom of Judea, provided Cæsar approved the will. Augustus confirmed the father's will, permitting Archelaus to ascend the throne, but without the title of king, or all the former territories of the crown of Judea; allowing him merely that of Ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea. Ethnarch means prince of the nation. To his brother Antipas, Cæsar gave the title of tetrarch, or prince of the fourth part of the province or kingdom, and Galilee was allotted to him; Philip, the last of the three brothers, obtained Iturea, another fourth part of the province.

‡ And coming, he dwelt in a city called Nazareth. (Matt. ii. 23.) Trombelli says that one of St. Joseph's motives in settling near to Jerusalem, was to be enabled to communicate more easily with Zachary. I do not accept this, for the author of the Ecclesiastical Canons adopted in the Sixth Council, relates that Herod having sought the Baptist to put him to death, and not finding him, as he had fled with his mother Saint Elizabeth, put Zachary to death. (Sandinus de Christo. cap. 5. § 6.) Saint Jerome in his commentary on St. Matthew, ch. 23,



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a house and some property within it, and was attracted by its being the residence of most if not all his kindred and acquaintance.

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treats as apocryphal, and of no authority, the books which state that Zachary was martyred by Herod.

The general edict of Herod against the children did not include the Baptist, as he was born at Hebron, far distant from Bethlehem; but it would not be difficult for an angered and jealous prince to issue a new decree condemning every child in Hebron to death; in the belief that the child, whose birth had excited so much attention among the mountains of Juda, might be the one proclaimed to be the king of the Jews.



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CHAPTER XI.

SAINT JOSEPH'S LIFE AT NAZARETH—HE PROCEEDS WITH THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE CHILD JESUS TO JERUSALEM, WHEN THE CHILD WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD—THE CHILD REMAINS IN THE TEMPLE, AND AFTER THREE DAYS IS FOUND AMONG THE DOCTORS.

MOST briefly does sacred history give us the whole life of the foster-father of Jesus, after his return from Egypt. "His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch." * Thrice a year were the men bound, according to the commandment in Exodus,† to present themselves before the Majesty and presence of the Sovereign God of Israel, in the spot which the Lord himself had appointed

* Luke ii. 41.

† Three times in the year all thy males shall appear in the sight of the Almighty Lord, the God of Israel. (Exod. xxxiv. 23.)

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for his public adoration and solemn worship. These appointed times are enumerated in Deuteronomy,* and are the solemnity of the Azymes or unleavened bread, the Feast of the Tabernacles, and the Feast of Weeks. In the days of Saint Joseph the spot appointed for the fulfilment of this law was the magnificent temple erected in Jerusalem. Not a few commentators and theologians, who freely attribute to the foster-father of Jesus a greater degree of poverty than became his sacred ministry, and his obligation of maintaining with some decency his noble and holy family, say, that in consequence of his indigence he went but once a year to Jerusalem; affirming that as Jerusalem was about a hundred miles distant from Nazareth, this journey would have required a period of time that he could not take from the exercise of the trade by which he supported his family. And if this motive had no force, the fear of Archelaus would be sufficient to divert the Saint from appearing frequently in Jerusalem. Others who will not have Saint Joseph to have been so poor, excuse him on the other hand from these three presentations which he should have made annually in the temple. Other writers, such as Maldonado and Calmet, aver that in the time of Saint Joseph, the Jews who were now scattered in districts remote from Jerusalem, went to present themselves in the temple, only on the solemn festival of the Pasch.

Some, bearing in mind the virtue, religiousness, and punctual obedience of Saint Joseph, do not agree with these writers, but deem it more probable that the holy Patriarch went down to Jerusalem each year at the three appointed seasons. Saint Luke speaks of his presentation on the

* Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose, in the feast of Unleavened bread, in the feast of Weeks, and in the feast of Tabernacles. (Deuteron. xvi. 16.)

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solemn day of the Pasch, and passes over the other two in silence; because he only mentions the occasions when the holy Patriarch went in company with his amiable spouse, who, like other women, was obliged to appear in the temple on such one of the three feasts as she might choose, according to the exposition of the most learned Tirinus.* Children who had not attained the age of twelve years were not bound by this law, and were not called children of the precept till they entered the thirteenth; nevertheless, we cannot believe that the parents of Jesus ever left to another's care the treasure which they esteemed more than their very lives. Cæsar Calinus† says that neither the Virgin Mary, nor the Infant Saviour before he attained the age of twelve, was bound to appear in the temple; but that Our Lady chose to present herself out of piety and devotion, and that Jesus went to obey his most holy Mother, who delighted to take him with her.

These pilgrimages to the temple before Jesus attained the age of twelve, are all the history of Saint Joseph's life that Saint Luke gives us of that period. The other actions of these three or four years spent at Nazareth before Christ first presented himself before the Lord, according to the Hebrew law, are unwritten; but we may conjecture by the previous light that we have as to his virtue and exact obedience to God's orders, that Saint Joseph, enlightened by the example of the Son and the Mother, increased in perfection like a giant of sanctity, so as to win from the Evangelist Saint Matthew the epithet of "just."

Meanwhile the tetrarch of Galilee, son though he was of King Herod, troubled not the seclusion of Joseph, and did

* Tirinus, in Luc. ii. 41. † Calinus, Tom. IV. Lib. III. cap. 8.



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not, that we know, ever molest the Holy Family. Nevertheless, unless, on the other hand, he was certain that Herod Antipas thought not of the new heir of the Jewish throne, the father of Jesus could not but have had his hours of anxious fear; for we know from history that a persecuted man starts, even when he but feels the wind blow from the quarter whence the first blow had come.

The pilgrimage of the Infant Jesus to Jerusalem before fulfilling his twelfth year, is a matter in dispute with the commentators on the second chapter of Saint Luke, where the Evangelist states that Jesus when twelve years old accompanied his parents to Jerusalem. Trombelli as to this point says: It seems very conformable to prudence that this was the first time that the Infant Jesus went to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord in compliance with the law of Deuteronomy. The tender age and delicate constitution of the child, did not permit him to be exposed to so long a journey as that from Nazareth to Jerusalem. Still less did Archelaus, a prince of cruel mind and suspicious intentions, permit it. But after the age of twelve, his age was no longer tender nor his constitution delicate, and as Archelaus was banished from the kingdom and deprived of his dominions, it was proper that He who came into the world, not to do away the law, but to fulfil it, should observe it publicly, by appearing with other males in the temple.

I know that Juvencus, a very ancient Christian poet, was of a different opinion, and writes that the parents of Jesus, who went to Jerusalem every year to venerate the Lord in his temple on the solemn feast of the Pasch, took the child Jesus with them. I know too that Bede, as cited by Maldonado, is of this opinion, which Calmet does not reject. This opinion is founded on the general command, which, including all males, seems to include boys also as soon as they

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were beyond infancy. I know too that Jesus was a strict observer of the law, and that his parents Joseph and Mary were also ; so much so, that the Blessed Virgin, although not included in the law of Deuteronomy, which mentions only males, nevertheless went every year to appear before the Lord in his holy temple on Mount Sion.

All this does not take me by surprise, and I even think that I have sufficiently hinted these objections elsewhere, and Grotius, a learned Protestant, well skilled in Holy Scripture, has already noted it. He nevertheless affirms, that reason and propriety required that children of his tender age should not be risked in fulfilling this rite, as they were unable to understand the instructions that their parents must necessarily have given as to the meaning of the law, for the book of Exodus shows that such instructions were required.* It was left then to parents, according to the opinion of this most learned man, to determine at what age their children should fulfil this commandment, and it was commonly believed that children were obliged at the age of twelve to go to Jerusalem. But Grotius also notes, that the more punctual of the Jews anticipated the fulfilment of this precept, and began to take their children to the temple before they attained the age of twelve.† This reflection may be admitted, noticing, however,

* Exodus xxxiv. 20.

† Credunt nonnulli, puerum Jesum in templum una cum parentibus suis ire statim cœpisse, ac per ætatem ambulare potuit; alii vero ivisse nunc primum (scilicet, cum esset annorum duodecim) ad Pascha celebrandum. Et quidem Hebræorum pueri duntaxat post annum ætatis duodecimum vocabantur filii præcepti. (Sandinus, *de Christo*, cap. ii. § 1.) Lex quæ in Exodo et Deuteronomio extat, in mares omnes concepta est. Sed cum ipsa ratio et æquitas doceret, id ad teneram admodum ætatem non pertinere, locus fuit æquæ interpretationi. Nihil enim referebat ad dies festos deduci eos, qui rerum istarum nullum habebant intellectum. Extat lex altera (Exod. xii. 27.), qua jubentur parentes liberis suis exponere historiam rerum in Ægypto gestarum, simul atque ceremoniæ istius causas inciperent

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that in the observance of other laws there was no danger of exposing Jesus and Mary to any grievous accident. It is very probable, then, that Jesus anticipated the obedience of the other precepts, in the execution of which no cruel blow threatened; but in the fulfilment of the commandment of the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, some disaster might be dreaded, while Archelaus reigned, as that prince might easily seek the child with the same intentions as his father.*

The celebrated Tirinus, following the eminent Cajetan in this point, and laying down other principles with Grotius, says that the commandment to appear before the Lord in the spot appointed, did not oblige till the age of twenty, and continued to that of fifty, or at most sixty.†

Calinus thinks that Christ before the age of twelve went to obey his mother, who wished to take him with her. She went to Jerusalem, as we have already said with this author, not from any obligation to present herself before the Lord in the temple, but to give these marks of religion to the Sovereign God of Israel, and to give this singular example of piety to the Jewish women. In carrying the child to Jerusalem neither the Blessed Virgin, nor Saint Joseph, departed from the dictates of prudence, if indeed the infant Saviour before the age of twelve went with his parents, as Calinus thinks. This might happen from one of two reasons. Archelaus might

inquirere, id est, simul atque ad rationis usum aliquem pervenissent: quod tempus cum lege definitum non esset videtur relictum arbitrio sapientum, atque ab iis definitum ætatem annorum duodecim. Discrimen hoc ætatis indicant et voces Hebrææ; nam intra annum duodecimum dicebantur infantes, sive parvuli: eo impleto, adolescentes. (GROTIUS, *in Luc.* ii.)

* TROMBELLI, Part I. cap. 28. num. 1–3.

† A vigesimo anno usque ad quinquagesimum, inquit Cajetanus, vel ut alii quidam, usque ad sexagesimum comparebit in loco qui publico Dei cultui destinabitur, ut post destinata fuit Ierosolyma. (TIRINUS, *in Exod.* xxiii. 17.,

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then have been deprived of his kingdom by Augustus Cæsar, and ordered to Vienne in France, the place of his exile; leaving his states in the hands of the procurators or presidents whom Rome put in his stead, the first of whom was Cauponius in the reign of Augustus, and the fifth, in the reign of Tiberius, Pontius Pilate, a native of Pontus and tributary of Rome.* On the other hand, it was easy, as Saint Augustine notes, for parents and child to escape observation amid the crowd of Jews, flocking to the holy city to adore God in the temple, the place appointed by him for the fulfilment of this rite. These two solutions, though but simple conjectures, are from Saint Augustine.† Hence we hold as certain only what Saint Luke writes,‡ that is, that the parents of the Infant God went every year to Jerusalem, and took Jesus when he had attained the age of twelve.

The Holy Family having, after five days' travel, reached the city of Jerusalem, adored the Sovereign God of Israel in his temple, offering together the oblation prescribed by the Almighty in the book of Exodus,§ for the Lord would not have his adorers come empty-handed before him: although the gift did not, as some expositors say,‖ leave the power of the offerer; the Almighty, who needs not our goods, being

* Sandinus, *De Christo*, cap. iv. § 11.

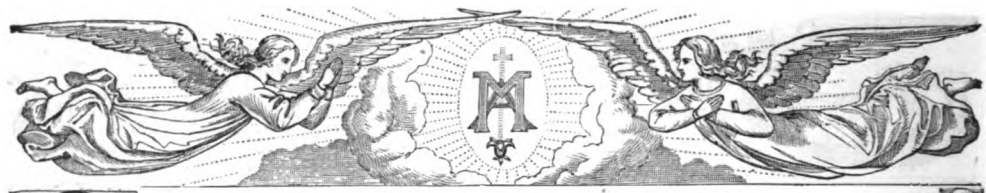
† An et hoc aliquis dicit: quomodo ergo, sicut Lucas (ii. 41.) narrat: "Ibant parentes ejus per omnes annos in Hierusalem." Quomodo si Archelai timore illuc prohibebantur accedere? Hoc mihi dissolvere non esset difficile, nec si aliquis Evangelistarum expressisset, quamdiu ibi regnaret Archelaus. Fieri enim poterat ut per diem festum inter tam ingentem turmam latenter ascenderent . . . Cum vero etiam de regno Archelai, quam fuerit diuturnum, omnes tacuerint, iste quoque intellectus patet, ut quod Lucas dicit: "Per omnes annos" ascendere solitos in Jerusalem, tunc accipiamus factitatum, cum jam non timeretur Archelaus. (St. Augustine, *De consensu Evangelistarum*, Lib. II. cap. x. § 23.)

‡ Luke ii. 43.

§ Neither shalt thou appear before me empty. (Exod. xxxiv. 20.)

‖ Trombelli, Part I. cap. 28. num. 11.

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contented with the voluntary oblation of the sacrifice. When the solemn days of the Pasch were ended, Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem for Nazareth; but the child, either to try the love of his parents, or to show the independence, which, as God, he had of them, remained in the temple without telling them. Joseph and Mary did not seek him at first, supposing that their child, of whose prudence they had no doubt, was in the company of some relative or townsman from Nazareth. The heresiarch Luther says that it was negligence or voluntary carelessness on the part of Joseph and Mary to have left the child in Jerusalem. What can we expect from one who claimed for his own judgment the infallibility which he denied the universal Church, but horrid blasphemies against the parents of Jesus?

Cæsar Calinus, whose work we have so often cited, speaking as a good Catholic and most pious writer, argues in favor of Joseph and Mary in this wise: "The error did not spring from the neglect, but from the respect of the parents. Mary and Joseph knew who the child was; and although in domestic affairs they commanded him, nevertheless, they allowed him all freedom, and venerated his actions as divine. Bede and others suppose, that as the men went separate from the women, Saint Joseph thought that the child Jesus was with his Mother, and she thought him with Joseph; but this opinion is not probable, as the sacred text does not mention the separation, merely saying, that the parents of Jesus supposed him to be with those who were returning from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Euthymius believes that Jesus did not inform his parents of his design, because he knew that they would refuse him permission to remain. But whoever argues this, shows that he does not understand the profound reverence wherewith Mary and Joseph treated the Infant God.

At the close of the first day the parents discovering the



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loss of the child, began to seek him among their relatives and acquaintances in the band of pilgrims. Not finding him, their hearts were rent with sudden and extreme grief, and deprived by the loss of Jesus from all means of comfort. . . Mary and Joseph were two blameless souls; but as it is a mark of the just to see faults in their conduct where there is none, they might perhaps fear that they had displeased their Jesus. . . They would also call to mind that sword, which, according to Simeon's prophecy, was to pierce the soul of the Mother of the Divine Child, and they might suppose that sad and mournful prophecy now about to be accomplished. . . .

During that night, which must have seemed ages long, they hoped every moment to find their child. At every noise they ran out to see whether it was the charm of their affections. The night passed in this bitter anxiety; when day dawned they turned back to Jerusalem, asking all they met whether they had seen such a child as they described; and hearing no tidings of their beloved Jesus, they entered the city to seek him in Jerusalem. They turned their steps to the inn where they had stopped, and there asked for the child. Baffled in their inquiries here, they proceeded to the temple the next day in the certain hope of finding him; nor did their heart deceive them, for on the third day they found him in the temple seated amid the doctors and asking them questions. As soon as his parents entered, they saw him, overwhelmed with amazement. As soon as the venerable meeting of Masters and Doctors of the law broke up, Jesus proceeded towards his parents with all the respect of a son; but Joseph was silent, leaving Mary to speak. Naming Saint Joseph first, as head of the family, she exclaimed: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing." Jesus an-

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swered, but the gospel tells us that they did not then understand his reply.*

The joy of the Blessed Virgin in thus finding her beloved Son, whom she had mourned as lost, has often been a subject of devout meditation, and is one of those mysteries which the faithful delight to contemplate in the Rosary. In this joy Saint Joseph shared in an eminent degree; for if, as the Mother of God declared, he had shared her grief, "thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," how can we but believe that He who will wipe away the tear from every eye, deluged the soul of His foster-father with an ocean of consolation and joy?

"Amissum Solymis quæris et invenis,
Miscens gaudia fletibus."

Happy we, if we never rest when we have lost Jesus by our sins, till we find him, and taste the joy which his presence will afford, here and hereafter.

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* Luke ii. 42 et seq.



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CHAPTER XII.

CLOSE OF SAINT JOSEPH'S LIFE.—HIS BLESSED DEATH.—HIS BURIAL AND SEPULCHRE.

ON his return from Jerusalem to Nazareth after the memorable occasion just noted, Saint Joseph lived in the society of the Blessed Virgin and Jesus, till the latter was entering his thirtieth year, according to the opinion of Saint Jerome,* and some historians who follow the common opinion among theologians and commentators on Holy Writ. Of the life led by the father of Jesus in the town or city of Galilee after the finding of the child in the temple, and his return to Jerusalem, we have no account but the brief words of Saint

* SAINT JEROME says (*Epist. XXII. cap.* 17.), "Jesum usque ad triginta annos parentum paupertate contentum fuisse."—"Jesus to the age of thirty lived contented in the poverty of his parents."

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Luke: *subditus illis*, "he was subject to them,"* which means that the Divine Child after completing his twelfth year lived under the authority and power of his parents. Saint Justin † the martyr, Origen and Eusebius, followed in later times by Tillemont,‡ say that the Holy Patriarch followed at Nazareth his trade as a carpenter, and that Jesus aided him, learning at the same time from his father Saint Joseph, as from a master, the trade and art of making ploughs, yokes, and other wooden objects. Neither they nor any other ancient writer give any description of the interior life of this great Saint; but we may believe that at every instant of his life, he counted more virtues than Alexander could number heroic actions, though that prince measured his age, not by years, but by the renowned dates of his conquests and victories. This silence may arise from the magnificent word "Just," § wherewith the gospel describes Saint Joseph, and which, well considered, leaves his best panegyrists nothing to say.‖ Or they perhaps omitted the virtues to employ their pens in the eulogy of the authority, whereby he had beneath his orders God made man: an authority which by its very nature sup-

* And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. (Luke ii. 51.)

† Et cum venisset Jesus ad Jordanem, et Josephi fabri lignarii filius haberetur . . . faberque adeo et ipse putaretur esse . . . aratra et juga conficiens."—"And when Jesus came to the Jordan, supposed to be the son of Joseph the carpenter . . . and was so himself regarded as a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes." (ST. JUSTIN, *Dialogue with Trypho.*)

‡ Although he was of so illustrious a race, of which some moderns even make him the head, he was nevertheless reduced to gain his livelihood by his manual labor at the city (or as some style it, the town) of Nazareth in Galilee, of the tribe of Zebulon. He made ploughs, cut down and trimmed trees, built houses and the like. (LENAIN DE TILLEMONT, *Tom. I. p.* 73.)

§ Joseph her husband being a just man. (Matt. i. 19.)

‖ And all know what a difference there is between being just according to the opinion of men, and being so according to the truth of the Gospel. (TILLEMONT.)

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poses a man consummate in the perfection of sanctity and in all the exercises of the spiritual life. Of this we shall speak, when we treat of the merits and virtues of the foster-father of Jesus. The Church applauds his honor and ministry by a hymn inserted in the matins of his office,* and following their mother the pious and learned Joseph Anthony Patrignani,† the Mexican poet Abad,‡ and Antonio Mendoza §

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* "Rex Deus regum, Dominator orbis,
Cujus ad nutum tremit inferorum
Turba, cui pronus famulatur æther,
Se tibi subdit."

"The Lord of lords and King of kings,
Ruler of sky and sea,
Whom Heaven and Earth and Hell obey,
Was subject unto thee."

CASWALL.

† It is impossible to find, in the infinite host of Saints, a personage greater than St. Joseph, and it is equally impossible to conceive an authority equal to that which he had by the right, wherewith he was invested, of commanding the Son of God. (PATRIGNANI, Lib. I. cap i.)

‡ "En quid agam? Attonitus (præstetne silere, loquine?)
Hæreo. Triginta annorum, quos egit Jesus,
Carne Deus nostra indutus (mirabile dictu!)
Hi sunt annales, duo verba hæc: 'subditus illis.'
Abditus ille domi, conclusus paupere tecto
Obsequio, neque præterea dum cognitus ulli;
Filius esse humilis fabri, ac de millibus unus
Esse putabatur, manibusque perinde laborem
Ipse exercebat, quasi fabri filius esset,
Curvabatque humeros lignis et ligna dolabat."

ABAD, *Heroica de Deo, Canto* 22.

§ Cuando de Dios pende todo,
ya de José Dios pendiendo
en su afan no mas afirman
sus áncoras tres alientos
Que de su trabajo solo
Dios vive, y su madre, lleno
de verdad y de ejercicio
el alto blason paterno.
Si es de José comun gloria
el decirlo, sea el serlo
medido á pasmos, á envidias
raya del merecimiento.

MENDOZA, Vida de la Virgen, 431-3.

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extol it in elegant verses, addressed to Jesus at the time when he vouchsafed to be under the obedience of the most worthy spouse of Mary.

Of the precise time of Saint Joseph's death or his age at the time we have no account: and historians do not agree as to the point. In the Coptic Synaxary, a collection of the lives of the Saints made by Michael, Bishop of Atribi and Melega, it is stated that Joseph passed to another world at the age of one hundred and eleven years; but this fact, like many others stated by this prelate in his work, is really but a fable, and a notion, which being based on the extravagant ideas of the people, deserves about as much credit as a newspaper or review.

Saint Joseph, according to the most authentic tradition, died in Jerusalem, having gone as was the custom among the Jews, to appear before the Lord in his temple on the solemn festival of the Pasch. By this we see that he was not as old as the Bishop of Melega would make him; because the law of the three annual presentations in the temple, as Tirinus says, was binding at most to the age of sixty. Vida, though a poet, and esteemed as such in the sixteenth century, did not say as much as the Bishop of Melega,* but he assents to another extravagant opinion or tradition; because (obscuring the elegance of this verse by a fact not admitted by the wise), he says that Saint Joseph survived to the time of Our Lord's passion. So far critics might have pardoned the error, but the fact by which he attempts to prove it, does not deserve this indulgence, as the reader may judge. Vida writes that the President of Judea, Pontius Pilate, being desirous of knowing what kind of a man was that king of

* The Coptic Synaxary was composed, according to Joseph Assemani, in the twelfth century.

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the Jews, who had been brought before his tribunal by the scribes and Pharisees, summoned Joseph, reputed father of Jesus, to throw some light on the matter. At the order of the judge, the father of Jesus, he says, appeared, and beginning from the first * he gave Pontius Pilate a complete account of the person of Christ.

Hyacinth Serri,† without mentioning this fact, says that defenders are not wanting among the Fathers of the Church for the opinion that Saint Joseph was alive at the time of our Saviour's death, and that nevertheless Our Lord commended his Mother to the Evangelist Saint John, to show that Mary was a virgin, and that Joseph had only been his reputed father. Now who are these Fathers of the Church whom Serri cites? He mentions Saint John Chrysostom, the author of the Passion of Our Lord, cited by Saint Cyprian, Saint Augustine, and Saint Ambrose. Of these Fathers the one who speaks most clearly is Saint Augustine, or the author of the sermon which the Benedictines of St. Maur have enrolled among the apocryphal works of the Saint, where it is stated without any solid authority, that Saint Joseph was present when Our Lord ascended triumphantly to heaven. If the author speaks of Saint Joseph resuscitated to accompany his Son Jesus in that triumph, it would be easy to credit him; but to say that Saint Joseph had not yet died, as Serri pretends, Tillemont ‡ deems the opinion unsustained by proof, because the

* Vida *Christiade Lib. III. v.* 29.

† Serri, *Exercitat.* 25, § 3.

‡ A sermon, which the Benedictines give in the appendix of St. Augustine, and which they ascribe to Saint Cesarius, says that St. Joseph was present at the ascension of Christ; but says so by an analogy, which can never serve as a foundation for facts. His words are: "Sol et Luna et undecim stellæ Christum adorarunt, quando post Resurrectionem apparuit: Sancta Maria quasi luna et Joseph quasi sol."—"The sun and moon and eleven stars worshipped Christ when he ap-

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author uses an allegory which does not decide this controversy.

Papebroke,† the continuer of the work of Bollandus, openly affirms, that we neither know nor can conjecture how long Saint Joseph survived, after returning to Nazareth when he found the child in the temple; but that it is little less than certain, and believed by most historians that the Saint died shortly before Christ began his preaching; because when the ministry of Jesus began, the Evangelists who named him before in connection with his most holy spouse the Virgin Mary, cease all mention of him, it being incongruous that the reputed father of Jesus should be alive, when Our Lord by his miraculous works was to prove that he had no father according to nature, but God. Tillemont‡ also

peared after his Resurrection: Saint Mary as the moon and Saint Joseph as the sun." (TILLEMONT, p. 78.)

* Quot vero annis post repertum reductumque e templo Jesum duodennem Joseph supervixerit, ne probabili quidem conjectura dici præcise potest: nisi quod propemodum certum sit et a plerisque habeatur indubitatum, prius mortuum esse quam se mundo manifestare Jesus inciperet. Cum nusquam illius amplius Evangelistæ meminerint . . . Neque vero conveniebat, ut qui operibus tam admirandis Dei se Filium probaturus erat, ejus et lege et nomine pater sub omnium oculis versaretur.—How many years Joseph may have survived the finding of Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve, and his return to Nazareth, cannot be precisely said by even probable conjecture: except that it is almost certain, and considered by many as beyond a doubt, that he died before Jesus began to manifest himself to the world; inasmuch as the Evangelists make no further mention of him. . . . Nor indeed was it becoming, that He, who by his wondrous works was to prove himself the Son of God, should have in the eyes of all one who was nominally and legally his father. (PAPEBROKE, *Comment. Histor. S. Joseph*, § 1, *num.* 8.)

† It is believed, and with great probability, that Joseph died before Christ began to preach the Gospel, and before the marriage of Cana, where Jesus was invited with his mother and his disciples; on that occasion Saint Joseph is not mentioned, nor is he in the whole history of Our Lord's public ministry. At his death, Jesus commended his mother to Saint John, which shows that St. Joseph was no longer alive, for Christ is not the author of division or divorce. (TILLEMONT, I. 78.)

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adopts Papebroke's opinion. Virgil Sedelmayr, too, objects to Serri, the authority of Saint Epiphanius, and other powerful writers, who will not be persuaded that, while Saint Joseph, the true spouse of the Blessed Virgin, was alive, Christ would have confided her to Saint John; and if Jesus forbore to commend his Mother to Saint Joseph for the reasons which Serri gives, the Evangelists who mention those who were present at the passion, would not pass over in silence his reputed father Saint Joseph, who from his firm and constant love to Jesus, could not but stand beside his foster-child in that hour of anguish and bitter forms of death.* Some have said † that Saint Joseph was alive and present at the sad spectacle of the death of Jesus; but that Christ did not commend his Mother to him, in consequence of his advanced age. Suppose this, but let those who assert it, answer me why Jesus, on commending his most holy Mother to Saint John, did not also commend his guardian and reputed father? It will be safer to believe, that on that melancholy occasion, he was out of this world; inasmuch as had he been alive, the holy old man Simeon would have prophetically announced to him the same sword of grief, which he announced to Mary his spouse and Mother of the Infant Deity.

The illustrious Suarez ‡ closes the argument by words which, from the authority and solidity of this doctor, may be considered as a decisive sentence. "I think that Saint Joseph did not die immediately after Christ's twelfth year,

* Stangelius certissimam vocat persuasionem, quod Sanctus Joseph non amplius fuerit vivus tempore passionis Dominicæ, quia alias Christus moriens, ut observat Epiphanius (Hæres. 78. c. 10.), Matrem suam certe non commendasset S. Joanni. (Sedelmayr, *Theologia Mariana*, Pars. I. q. 1. art. 10.)

† Antonius Sandinus, *De S. Josepho, nota* 29. § 10.

‡ Suarez, Tom. II. in 3 disp. 7. sect. 1–3.

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because Saint Luke, when he says that the Child returned to Nazareth with his parents, and there was subject to their orders, shows that he lived for some years with them. And it is credible that Saint Joseph survived to maintain Jesus to his thirtieth year, when he was to begin the preaching of the gospel." Alexander, who died almost on the threshold of life, said on a certain occasion when his age was spoken of, that he had lived many ages if men reckoned his life, as he did, not by years but by victories.* These words, which in the mouth of that conqueror who made the earth tremble with his presence, signify his many triumphs, transferred to the years and life of Saint Joseph, are the chronology and a clear idea of his virtues; for, according to the expression of Gerson,† he lived many ages, if we count, not his years, which at most could not have exceeded sixty, but the victories which his constancy and loyalty in God's service won in the calamitous theatre of those times. Finally, after many ages of triumphs, he closed a mortal life with a death caused, not by the hatred of the Scribes and Pharisees, but occurring in the natural way: for had that council of the Jews, so fearful of their country's ruin, caused his death, history would not have deprived us of the notice of so important an event.

Joseph in his death, which was a tranquil one, had the

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* Verum ego qui non annos meos, sed victorias numero, si munera fortunæ bene computo diu vixi. (QUINTUS CURTIUS, Lib. IX. cap. 12.)

† "Dipingitur alicubi senex propter mentis et castitatis virtutem: sicut dicit Sapiens, quod *Ætas senectutis* vita immaculata."—"Joseph is sometimes painted as an old man from his virtue of mind and chastity, as the Wise Man says, "Old age is a spotless life." (GERSON, *Sermo de Nativitate V. Mariæ.*)

Ergo Joseph reputasse senem fecere senilis
In se virtutes.

GERSON, *in Josephina.*

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happiness of being, as the Church chants in her hymns,* and as art portrays, assisted by Jesus and Mary, who closed his eyes with their sacred hands, shedding at the same time, as Borgoineus and Eckius say,† copious tears of love over the venerable body; so that then, more justly than at Lazarus's death, might the Jews say, "See how they loved him."‡ His death, it is piously believed, was caused by that divine love, wherewith Mary by her example and the Man-God by his presence inspired him. Bernardine de Bustos § and other writers relate, with expressions of piety, as happening on that occasion what probably took place at the happy death of a Joseph so worthy of the tears of Jesus and Mary, whom he had served with a father's love and treated with the most profound respect. Love, which deprived him of life did not deprive him of feeling, and the pain of leaving his son and spouse to await that blow of grief which threatened them, and which Heaven had decreed. Pious souls, when they contemplate the departure and last sighs of the father of Jesus and spouse of Mary, cannot check the outgushing of their feelings, and the tears which spontaneously rise to their eyes. It is not easy to repeat what authors write of this sad moment; but not to pass over all, I shall close with an extract

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* O nimis felix, nimis o beatus;
Cujus extremam vigiles ad horam,
Christus et Virgo simul adstiterunt
Ore sereno.

O blest beyond the lot of mortal men;
O'er whose last dying sigh,
Christ and the Virgin watched with looks serene,
Soothing his agony.
Hymn for Lauds on St. Joseph's day.—Caswall's translation.

† Jesus and Mary closed his eyes; each heart was rent with grief, and tears gushed forth. (BORGOINEUS, *Meditation* 14.) JOANNES ECKIUS, *Homil. II. de Sancto Josepho.*

‡ John xi. 36.

§ BERNARDINE DE BUSTOS, *Sermo de S. Josepho, cap. III. art. 3.*

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from a discourse of one of the most eloquent of the panegyrists of Saint Joseph. "We cannot fix precisely," says Father Binet, "the year of Saint Joseph's death; what is regarded as certain is, that he passed from this to another life before the passion of Christ. He died in the arms of Jesus and Mary: a happiness which causes feelings of the deepest devotion. I cannot conceive how death, who is painted as blind, aimed so well; doubtless unable for his blindness to see the two lights that stood by the bedside of the dying patriarch, he dared to pass between Jesus and Mary. His passage to the other world was more a triumph than a death. He finally breathed the last sigh, which Christ and the Blessed Virgin received. On that occasion, I doubt not, all the court of Heaven descended to venerate that body, in which had dwelt so great a soul, adorned with those riches of virtue which the Gospel embraces in the name Just."

Joseph Anthony Patrignani* follows Binet's discourse with these pious expressions, which I add to afford the devout clients of Saint Joseph this incentive of devotion: "Oh! how at that moment, the last of his life, must not Jesus have rewarded with a torrent of confidence him, who, as a father, bore a father's fears and toils! 'Go,' must the angels have said, 'go, O new precursor, and bear to the holy patriarchs the tidings of their coming liberation, which now appears as the dawn of the Sun of Justice above the horizon, foretokening happiness; meanwhile we weave thee this crown of roses, and lilies, and this starry robe which thy purity deserves, and thy dignity of Father of Jesus, a title never bestowed on angels. Already is thy throne prepared at the right hand of that which awaits thy spouse. Thou shalt be as the great counsellor in the court of Heaven, the treasurer of the riches

* Patrignani, Lib. I. cap. xiv.

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and graces which the Almighty Father dispenses ; thou shalt be the protector of the Church about to arise, and the advocate of its children in all necessities and cares.' The Mother of God, speaking with the sweet eloquence of her eyes, more than with the tender harmony of her voice, thanked him for his care in ministering to her, with such signs of gratitude as kindled new flames of divine love in the noble heart of Saint Joseph. In these colloquies that splendid light gave its last gleams, like the sun when near its setting."

The death and happy passage of Saint Joseph is said by some to have taken place on the twentieth of July ; but these have followed the chronology and error of the Copts and other oriental Christians ; the best supported tradition and the martyrologies name the nineteenth of March for the solemnization of his memory ; but of this we shall treat more at length when we come to speak of devotion to the glorious foster-father of Jesus and spouse of Mary. Joseph having died in the presence of his beloved spouse and foster-son, Christ, says Gerson, Christ who vouchsafed to prepare that sacred and virginal body for the grave, placed the hands upon the breast and blessed it to prevent its decay ; he stationed, too, as we may with Gerson piously believe, angels to guard the holy remains till they were borne to the tomb. As the funeral of Saint Joseph was left to the hands of an Almighty Son who had received such services from the saint, I have no hesitation in believing, that much of what Gerson relates took place ; but I do not set down my opinions, as it is vain to relate facts which we believe, unless we can substantiate them by tradition or historical documents.

Bernardine de Bustos,* relating what may be piously

* "Nullus unquam fuit, qui tantam partem habuerit de dulci Jesu, et de benedicta Matre ejus, sicut Joseph, qui, ut creditur, per triginta annos cum eis conver-

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believed, says that Jesus and Mary attended Saint Joseph in his last illness, and that without leaving his couch they comforted him, and that Joseph said: "O, my Jesus, I die consoled with the hope that shortening the time of thy clemency, thou wilt quickly redeem us." With these words on his lips he expired, after having lived thirty years in the loving company of the glorious Virgin and her Son Jesus.

Isidore Isolanus and others, as well ancient as modern writers, insert in their lives of Saint Joseph what is given by the Oriental Christians in their ancient life of the saint, omitting what is rejected by writers of the Latin Church. The Abbate Trombelli, a discreet critic, admits that this life is destitute of all authority. He nevertheless cites it to gratify pious souls that would wish to read it, warning his readers that it pretends to have been related by Our Lord on Mount Olivet. For the same reason, and with the same advice as Trombelli, I insert some extracts, omitting a few clauses which might have stood the test of criticism in the days of Isolanus, but that science growing with years, and flying with the wings of time, teaches by new discoveries to distinguish between light and smoke, and to separate truth from falsehood.

"One day," say the Orientals, "Our Lord and Saviour

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satus est in hoc mundo; nam parum ante baptismum Christi mortuus est, ut communiter tenetur."—"No one ever shared so much in sweet Jesus and his blessed mother, as Joseph, who lived with them, it is believed, for thirty years; for the common belief is, that he died shortly before the baptism of Christ." (BERNARDINE DE BUSTOS, *Marial. Part.* 4. *Serm.* 12.) "Pie igitur creditur, quod dulcis Jesus, et piissima Virgo infirmo Joseph solicite serviebant . . . dicebatque Joseph Domino Jesu: Nunc lætus morior quod cito venies liberare nos."—"It is then piously believed, that sweet Jesus and the most loving Virgin solicitously tended Joseph in his sickness . . . and that Joseph said to the Lord Jesus, Now I die cheerful, hoping that thou wilt come speedily to relieve us." (BERNARDINE DE BUSTOS, *Serm. de Sancto Josepho, art.* 3. *cap.* 3.)

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sitting with his disciples on Mount Olivet, spoke thus of his foster-father Saint Joseph : 'Joseph was a carpenter of Bethlehem, of the house of David. From his youth he learned science and wisdom. He knew the carpenter's trade . . . . And after that Joseph grew old and advanced in years : but his body was not weakened, nor was the sight of his eye dimmed, nor did a tooth in his head decay, nor did his mind wane, but he was, though so aged, complete in all his powers as in his youth. . . . Now the days of Joseph were nigh that he should die, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said that he should quickly pass from this world and be laid with his fathers. Then Joseph feared, and rising up he went to Jerusalem, and entering the temple he prayed long to God to be propitious to him in the hour of his death, and send the holy Archangel Michael to defend him from his enemies. And he prayed also that his good angel, who had been appointed to guard him from his mother's womb, should appear to him with a joyful face and pleasing aspect to attend his soul, nor permit the terrible and hostile spirits to approach it. And when he had prayed he returned to Nazareth, and entered his house, and falling sick he lay upon his couch, and his infirmity increased greatly. . . . . And when he had said this his sickness overcame him, and he could no longer speak. Then I sat at Joseph's head and my Mother at his feet. Then the aged man turned towards me and sighed towards me with great sighs. . . . and thus patiently and joyfully he expired. With my own hands I closed his eyes and arranged his features. And all the city hearing of Joseph's death came, and intimate friends washed his body and anointed it with the best ointment. In the meantime I besought my Father, and when my prayer was ended, a multitude of angels came, and I commanded two of them to attire the body of Joseph, and the angels clad the body of



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the blessed and aged man in a white garment. And I blessed his body that it might not decay. And I said: "I will bless and I will aid every man in the church of the Just who on the day of thy memory, O Joseph, shall offer sacrifice to God. And whoso shall meditate on thy life and thy labors, and thy passage from this world, when his soul shall leave his body I will blot out his sins from the book, that he be not punished in the day of judgment. And pestilence shall not enter nor sudden death come upon the house where thy memory shall be." And the ancients bore the body of Joseph to the grave: and I remembered the days when he bore me to Egypt, and his manifold labors which he endured with me, and leaning over his body I wept. And they laid the corpse of my father Joseph in the sepulchre beside his father Jacob.'"

This account of the Orientals is, however, of no authority, and as the learned say, a fable, which, crediting vulgar traditions, was believed by those unenlightened people.*

No historian fixes with certainty the spot where the holy patriarch died and was buried. Calmet supposes that he passed to another life from the same city in which he took up his abode when he came from Egypt; and that in that city, namely Nazareth, he was buried.† The only foundation on which this writer relies is the opinion that he died in the place of his ordinary residence. This conjecture does not seem to be of much force, for a man, for all his fixing his residence in one spot, has all the world to die in. The learned continuers of the arduous undertaking of Bollandus, following Saint Adamnan and Bede, or the author of the work on the holy places of Palestine, say that Saint Joseph was buried in the valley of Josaphat; and that it is by no means

* See Tillemont and others.

† CALMET, *Dissertation on St. Joseph, before his Commentary on Saint Luke.*

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improbable that his death was so divinely disposed, as to occur in that time of the year, when, in accordance with the custom of the festival day, he would go up to Jerusalem with his wife and son. In this way a desire ever predominant in the Jews would be fulfilled in his case, and that was, to be buried in the sepulchre of their ancestors.* Bede thinks, too, that Joseph's tomb was near that of the holy and venerable Simeon; but critics do not admit this, believing that it sprang from the error of some who confounded his tomb with the sepulchre of Joseph, surnamed the Just, the competitor of Saint Matthias in the choice made by the Apostles for one to fill the vacant place of Judas. The ancient Oriental Christians write in the life of Saint Joseph, that he was interred in the sepulchre of Jacob his father, but this account is, as we have said, of no authority.† We must then recur to the conjecture of Papebroke, to suppose that Saint Joseph died in Jerusalem, and was buried in that valley, in which stand the tomb of Josaphat and the garden of Gethsemani; unless, indeed, we incline to believe that he died at Nazareth, where he had settled, but commanded his remains to be borne to the valley of Josaphat, where stood the tomb of his illustrious ancestors.

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* Papebrochius, *Comment. Hist. de S. Josepho*, ACTA SANCTORUM, § 11.

† On a montré son tombeau dans les siècles posterieures en la vallée de Josaphat près de Jerusalem. (Les anciens n'en ont point parlé); et Bollandus croit même que ce pouvait être le tombeau de Joseph le juste, proposé avec St. Matthias pour être élevé à l'apostolat. (TILLEMONT, I. 29.)

On pretend que les Coptes et les autres Orientaux en fort une fête fort solennelle le 20 Juillet, auquel ils mettent sa mort sur l'autorité d'une vie pleine de fables. *id.*

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE FEATURES AND COUNTENANCE OF ST. JOSEPH.

SAINT JOSEPH, the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God, was endowed with an aspect full of beauty and majesty, and in a certain manner superior to the prototype which Heaven gave in that ancient Joseph, whose beauty seemed a wonder to the Egyptians. The Holy Ghost depicts the first Joseph, describing the beauty and majesty of his countenance ; and Eusebius portrays to us the second, who was the foster-father of Jesus, telling us in one of his writings, that Saint Joseph was a man of rare modesty, and a stature in which shone all perfection.* But I deem it impossible to

* Fu dotato S. Giuseppe di un bellissimo e maestosissimo aspetto non inferiore certo al suo Prototipo, cioè, all' antico Giuseppe, la cui belleza era una maraviglia d'Egitto *Erat autem Joseph pulchra facie et decorus aspectu*, scrisse di questo lo Spiritu Santo (Gen. xxxix. 6.), e dell' altu scrisse Eusebio Cesariense (Lib. VII.

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form a suitable idea of the form and features of the spouse of the Virgin, that loveliest among creatures, without first holding up to the view a sketch of the bodily perfections of that Jesus, in whom grace, following the sacred designs of Heaven, set, as Gerson says,* the portrait of his reputed father, Saint Joseph. Christ was of a most perfect body, and so admirably, so sovereignly formed, that the royal prophet David,† gazing at it even from afar, could not withhold the rapturous applause of exceeding beauty, even in that nation which had given so many examples of loveliness, applauded in the Holy Scriptures with high eulogium.

Hyacinth Serri, a critic noted for his extreme rigor of opinion, disputes the beautiful features which nature gave the immaculate body of the Man-God ;‡ but the beauty of Jesus does not need the tribute of his pen, when a Chrysostom § and a Thomas ‖ have paid theirs, describing so clearly the perfections of Jesus' body that they seem to outshine the sun in light and beauty of expression. The prince of theologians is followed by the illustrious Suarez ¶ and Father Segneri, an illustrious orator and theologian.** And had

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De Præparat. Evang. cap. I.) Aderat Josepho pudor eximius, sed pietate in Deum maxime præstabat, eratque admirabili corporis præditus formatione. (PATRIGNANI, Lib. I. ch. xiv.)

* Gratia naturæ fieri vult consona sæpe,
Valde fuit similis, quod gratia, non caro fecit.

† Thou art beautiful above the sons of men. (Ps. xliv. 4.) Fu Cristo di fattezze si scelte, si sovrane, che fatto degno non so qual volta. Il re Davidde di mirarlo, ancorche da lungi non poti quasi estatico temperarsi di non gridere. Oh che vaghezza! Oh che grazia! Oh che gentilezza! *Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum.*" (SEGNERI, *nel Panegirico della Santa Sindone.*)

‡ SERRI, *Exercitat.* 42 art. 2.

§ CHRYSOSTOM, Hom. xxviii. in Matth.

‖ ST. THOMAS, apud Suarez, Tom. I. in 3. part. disp. 31. sects. 2 & 5.

¶ Figura autem singulorum membrorum, eorumque compositio optima fuit in corpore Christi. (SUAREZ, *Tom.* 1. *in* 3 *p. D. Thomæ, disp.* 31. § 2.)

** SEGNERI, *Panegirico* della Santa Sindone.

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these been silent as to the surpassing beauty of Jesus, what other Fathers of high authority have said would suffice for its belief. Beauty in man means majesty of countenance, according to the description of Cicero.* And who is ignorant, asks Saint Jerome,† that majesty and grace were so effulgent in the countenance of the Son of God, that at first sight eyes and heart were alike wounded by the powerful attractions of the beauty which the divine hand set in that countenance, where the heavens and the flowers study their beauty? This is the portrait of Saint Joseph, who, according to Gerson,‡ must have been like to Jesus, that men seeing a great similarity between Christ and Saint Joseph, would not suspect the secret providence of Heaven, who wished the Man-God to be considered the son of the illustrious spouse of Mary.

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* Pulchritudinis duo genera sunt, quorum in altero venustas est; in altero dignitas. Venustatem muliebrem dicere debemus, dignitatem virilem."—"There are two kinds of beauty, in one of which there is grace, in the other dignity; grace we must call feminine, dignity manly." (CICERO, *De Officiis.*)

† Certe fulgor ipse et majestas Divinitatis occultæ, quæ etiam in humana facie relucebat, ex primo ad se videntes trahere poterat aspectu. (ST. JEROME, *Cap. IX. in Matth.*)

‡ De Joseph ratio suadet, sua quod facialis
Forma quidem Jesu similis reputanda fuisset.
Si non, quo facto pater ejus creditus esset?
Qualiter omni modo matris servasset honorem,
Disparitas vultus prolis cum patre putato.

GERSON, *in Josephina.*

See too Nicephorus Callistus, (Lib. I. ch. 40,) where, describing the person of Christ, he says: "Egregio, vividoque vultu fuisse, et per omnia persimilem divinæ et immaculatæ suæ Genitrici."—"He was of a striking and lively countenance, and in all most like his divine and immaculate Mother."

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CHAPTER XIV.

WHETHER ST. JOSEPH WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO ROSE WITH CHRIST.



WHEN Our Lord died and rose again, there rose with him many bodies of the saints who had passed to another life, as we learn in the twenty-seventh chapter of Saint Matthew. The Gospel does not tell us what saints they were whose bodies thus passed from the horrors of the tomb to life with Jesus, nor do the ancient Fathers speak of those persons celebrated for sanctity who were thus raised, in order by their new life to confirm the resurrection of the Author of their liberty. Commentators are left accordingly to conjecture and surmise, to say any thing in particular as to these holy men, among whom we must number Saint Joseph; because it is unlikely that a saint of so exalted a dignity and wonderful favor, would have been deprived by Jesus of this grace when

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granted to others. Some writers,* supposing that Saint Joseph returned to life, add that one of the motives of his resurrection was to console his Immaculate Spouse, whom his presence could not but please.

As to the other saints who certainly arose, Saint Thomas speaks as follows: "It may be asked, what became of those who rose with Our Lord? For we must believe that they returned to life to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection. Some think that they died again, relapsing into their former dust, like Lazarus and others whom Our Lord raised up. But these authors are unworthy of credit, for it would be a greater torture for these saints to die a second time, than not to have been raised to life. We must then believe, without further examination, that the saints who rose with Jesus, ascended with Him to heaven." †

Besides this conjecture of the Angelic Doctor, Saint Joseph (supposed to have risen with the rest) has in favor of his permanent resurrection proof that under all the circumstances seems conclusive. For it is an undoubted fact that neither on the spot where his tomb is said to have been,‡ nor in any part of the world, is any relic of Saint Joseph's body venerated, when we know that by human investigation or divine revelation, relics have been discovered of the bodies of Saint Anne, Saint John the Baptist, and the Apostles. In a sermon on Saint Joseph, Saint Bernardine of Sienna thus sets forth his opinion: "We cannot affirm as certain,

* Certainly it is most probably believed that among the Saints whose bodies returned to life at our Lord's resurrection, was St. Joseph. Many add that this was for Mary's consolation. (TROMBELLI, *Part. I. ch.* 37. *sum.* 2.)

† ST. THOMAS, *in Matth. XXVI.*

‡ "Privata sunt ista mausolea sacris pignoribus (mausolea scilicet S. Joachimi, S. Annæ, S. Josephi et Mariæ Virginis)."—"These sepulchres are bereft of their sacred deposits." (PAPEBROKE, *Acta Sanctorum*, March 20.)

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but we may piously believe, that the most pious Son of God, Jesus Christ, conceded to his foster-father the same privilege as to his mother, that from the day of his glorious resurrection, Saint Joseph might be body and soul with Christ, as his glorious spouse the Blessed Virgin was ere long to be; and also that the Holy Family, composed of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, who lived in the same toils and same union of charity on earth, might live body and soul in glory according to the rule of the Apostle,* who says, that the companions of Christ in consolation, shall be those who shared his tribulations."

Bernardine de Bustos,† in confirmation of this opinion, says, that while Saint Bernardine of Sienna was preaching in Padua that Saint Joseph was soul and body in glory, a cross as brilliant as gold appeared above his head, a prodigy whereby Heaven, it would seem, wished to attest the truth of what

* "As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation" II. Corinth. i. 7.

† At Christ's resurrection, when many of the holy Patriarchs rose (Matt. xxvii.), it is piously believed that Saint Joseph also rose, and with Christ visited his spouse the Blessed Virgin; and St. Bernardine preaching this at Padua, cried out: "St. Joseph is in heaven glorious in soul and body," whereupon a cross of gold was seen upon his head. And so I believe that he is in eternal life in soul and body, with great and unspeakable glory. (BERNARDINE DE BUSTOS, *Marial*, Part IV. Serm. 12.)

Against the opinion of St. Thomas there is a revelation of Saint Bridget, in which she affirms, that the Mother of God told her that only her body and that of Christ her Son, were in heaven. (*Revel. Lib. VI. cap.* 49. *Lib. VII. cap.* 26.) This revelation is not a conclusive argument against the opinion of the Angelic Doctor, whose position is sustained by Suarez. (*Tom. II. in Pt.* 1. *disp.* 8. *sect.* 8.) Tirinus (*in Matt.* i. 16.) Cornelius a Lapide (*in Matt.* xxvi. 52.) Gerson in his panegyric on the birth of the Virgin, delivered before the Fathers of the Council of Trent and Theophilus Raynaud. (*Diptyc. Marian. Part* 1. *punc.* 4. *numb.* 22.) Because, as Sedelmayr remarks, in his *Theologia Mariana*, the revelations of Saint Bridget contain some points not generally received, such as that Saint Joseph was an old man at the birth of Christ, and other like points as to the Virgin which are uncertain.

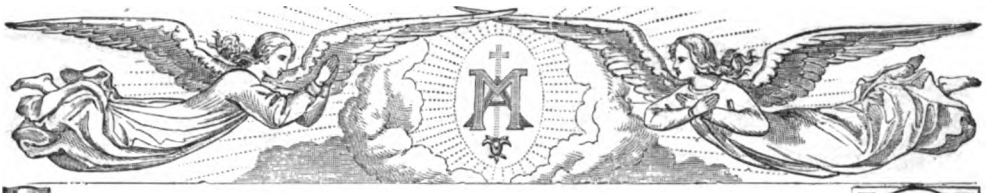
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that illustrious orator had advanced concerning the holy spouse of the Mother of the Man-God.

As later writers have adopted the same view, and as the opinion that Saint Joseph rose and ascended with Our Lord is the one which prevails almost universally among the faithful, we shall dwell no longer upon it, but proceed to the consideration of his dignity, and the favors which he received from Heaven.



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BOOK SECOND.

THE DIGNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH, THE FAVORS WHICH THE ALMIGHTY BESTOWED UPON HIM, AND A DESCRIPTION OF HIS VIRTUES.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE TWO GREAT TITLES AND FAVORS WHEREWITH HEAVEN HONORED SAINT JOSEPH.



THE measure of the greatness of the saints is usually that honorable ministry with which the Almighty deigned to honor them. Saint Peter is represented as great in every respect, and the great luminary among the Apostles by the prerogative of being Vicar of Christ, whereby he is known and respected by the faithful as the Supreme Head of Christendom. "The rank," says Saint John



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Chrysostom,* "which in fact elevates the Prince of the Apostles above the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Augustuses, above a monarch, could there be one, of the whole wide world." What shall we say of the foster-father of the Man-God, adorned with the dignity of true and real spouse to Mary, an honor granted to none, even among angelic spirits. I believe that Saint Chrysostom would, in view of these glorious titles, think as Saint Bernard does in the eloquent pages he has left us.† Endeavoring to tell us briefly what Saint Joseph had been, Saint Bernard merely sets before our eyes the title of putative father of Jesus, with this sentence: "The nature and qualities of Saint Joseph are summed up in the title wherewith God honored him, in such a way that all styled and believed him to be the father of Jesus." Other writers do the same, when they wish to give an idea of the greatness of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God: and they accordingly describe the holy patriarch's dignity first, thence deducing as a consequence of his honorable titles the advantages of his greatness. I desire to imitate them, and accordingly without commencing at the highest, I say that Saint Joseph traced back his origin to the royal blood and throne of David and the other kings of Juda, in whom God maintained for so many centuries the sceptre and the crown of Judea, among others from Ezechias ‡ and Josias, whom the Scriptures applaud for the eminent virtues which they displayed on the throne. This illustrious origin drew many advantages to the person of Saint Joseph. By its recollection he was inspired with noble and generous

* St. John Chrysostom, *Homil. in Ep. ad Romanos. cap.* i.

† Quis et qualis fuerit Beatus Joseph, conjice ex appellatione, qua licet dispensatoria meruit honorari adeo, ut Pater Dei dictus et creditus sit. (St. Bernard, *Hom. II. super Missus est.*)

‡ IV. Kings, xviii. 3; xxii. 1.

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thoughts, as Mendoza well expresses it.* It made him heir of the sceptre of Judea and worthy spouse of her who was chosen to be Mother of God, and who, according to the laws of the nation, was to marry her nearest kinsman. A signal favor surely, and due to the Almighty arm, which, for the execution of its eternal designs, ordained in adorable providence that the saint should be, under the circumstances, the nearest relative of the Blessed Virgin Mary. That is to say, that by this grace Saint Joseph was elevated by God to the highest pinnacle of human happiness; for, as the ingenious panegyrist of Constantine remarks,† (on that emperor's alliance with Maximian by espousing the daughter of the latter,) the equal nobility of the consorts is the acme of that glory which men esteem, and most illustrious when an emperor's daughter espouses an emperor.

This excellence is by its nature so sublime, and so clear in its splendor, that it has forced the holy Fathers,‡ the theologians,§ and even critics,‖ to say that the glory of being

* Hijo de David, no temas
le dice. Oh cuántos estrechos
el valor navegaria,
pues le acordó tal abuelo?

† Quid enim rebus humanis contingere, aut nobilius ad gloriam, aut certius ad salutem, potuit quod quam pristinæ vestræ concordiæ, perpetuæque pietati hoc quoque pignus accessit summorum nominum arctissima conjunctione venerabile: Ut imperatori filiam collocaverit Imperator. *Orator Antiquus, apud Cagnolinum, qui orationes panegyricas antiquis Imperatoribus dictas collegit.* (Orat. II. p. 1.)

‡ "*Virum Mariæ*; hoc est prorsus ineffabile, et nihil præterea dici potest." Husband of Mary! ineffable expression, which leaves naught to say. (St. John Damascenus, *Orat. de Nativit. Virginis.*)

§ "*Vir Mariæ*, hæc ergo fuit prima ejus prærogativa." Husband of Mary—this was then his first prerogative. (Suarez, Part. 3. Disp. 8. sect. 1.)

‖ The Evangelist, St. Matthew, seems to have accumulated on St. Joseph all praise that can be conceived or spoken, when he said: "Husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ." (Papebroke, *Acta Sanctorum ad diem* 19. *Martii.*)—Il suffit pour faire l'éloge de Saint Joseph, de dire, qu'il a été l'epoux de la Sainte Vierge. (Tillemont, *Tom. I. p.* 73.)

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chosen a spouse of the Blessed Virgin is the first prerogative of Saint Joseph. From the glorious prerogative of spouse of the Mother of God, we cannot separate the title of guardian and father of Jesus, wherewith the Eternal Wisdom of the heavenly Father honored Saint Joseph. This glory appeared at almost every instant of his life. We shall here, therefore, merely show what he obtained by reason of this pre-eminence, and what Heaven put under his charge in raising him to the dignity of spouse of Mary. His union with this maiden, the chosen Mother of the Messias, entitled Saint Joseph to the title of father of Jesus, making him the head of the Holy Family, and prince in all the dominions of his Lord, as the Church teaches us, by applying to him the words in which the Scriptures describe the glorious ministry and priority of the first Joseph in Pharaoh's palace,* who was in some sort called father by a special decree of the Almighty ;† a title which represents to the world his worth, his greatness, and his authority. This glory of father of Christ was not given by nature ; but this does not prevent our styling Saint Joseph in some sort the true father of Jesus, according to the opinion of great theologians, whose opinions I cannot omit, as they redound to the singular glory of the most holy spouse of Mary. I shall begin by Gerson, who is the greatest panegyrist of Saint Joseph, of all who have applauded his dignity and virtues. "Mary's virginal body," says Gerson, "was Saint Joseph's by the divine law of matrimony, in which takes place a mutual surrender of each other's body. Let us see, then, whether in discreet sense we can properly say that Christ was born of the body and

* He made him master of his house, and ruler of all his possession. (Ps. cv. 21.)

† Not by your counsel was I sent hither, but by the will of God; who hath made me as it were a father to Pharaoh. (Gen. xlv. 8.)

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flesh of Joseph. We might, perhaps, affirm it, but for fear of shocking the ear of any pious soul. What we may openly say is, that Joseph was the father of Jesus by reputation :* father, too, by the solicitude and care with which he brought him up : father also by generation, not his own, but in the virginal body of Mary, who belonged to her spouse Joseph by the right of matrimony, the Holy Ghost co-operating and in a manner taking the place of Joseph." Father Suarez confirms this thought of Gerson with the words of the Apostle,† and with texts of the old Roman jurisprudence, which was delineated in the Old Testament, in which it is said that the fruit belongs to the owner of the field or possession where it is produced.‡ Carthagena follows the same opinion, and adds that Saint Joseph may be called the true father of Jesus, because he concurred by his care and solicitude in the happy birth of the Infant God.§ These authors are not moderns, and will, perhaps, for that reason not be so cordially received by those fashionable critics, who believe

* "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband." (1 Cor. vii. 4.)

† At vero quia corpus Mariæ fuit ipsius Joseph jure matrimoniali, quo fit mutua traditio corporum viri ad mulierem et contra; videamus, si cum intelligentiæ sobrietate dicere fas nobis sit, quod ex corpore et carne Joseph natus est Christus. Et hoc dici forsitan posset, nisi piarum aurium timeretur offensio. Fuit itaque Joseph pater Jesu reputatione: fuit pater curatione, qua nutritus fuit: fuit tertio pater generatione, non quidem sua, sed Maria uxore sua, coöperante Spiritu Sancto, et quodammodo Joseph vices gerente. (GERSON, *Serm. de Nativitate Virginis*, in Concil. Constantiæ, Consed. III.)

‡ Institut. De rerum divisione, § *Si Titus* 31. Deuteronomy, xxxiii. 13–16.

§ Licet revera Christum non genuerit, pleno tamen ore ab Evangelista (*Lucæ.* ii 33) pater ejus vocatur. *Et erat pater ejus et mater ejus mirantes.* Non falsus, sed verus jus pater censeri debet; nam, ut acute dixit Augustinus: (*Lib. II. de Consens. Evangelistarum, cap. XXIV.*) *Nasci etiam eis filius potuit sine ullo complexu carnali* Qua ratione intelligendum hoc sit, hoc modo explico: lumine rationis notissimum est, non solum illum vere dici juvisse. ut res fiat, qui partim rei produxit substantiam, sed et eum, qui juvit ut res congruo et debito modo fieret. (CARTAGENA, Lib. XVIII. Hom. 7.)

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that light first dawned on man in the present century. I do not wish to lose time in contradicting them, nor avowing myself that

Laudator temporis acti

of whom Horace sings. Still, not to give consent to their opinions by silence, I will allege in favor of the opinion of a Gerson, a Suarez, a Carthagena, Tillemont * and Trombelli,† moderns who are well received at the severe tribunal of the criticism of our day. These authors say that Saint Joseph may in a true sense be called the father of Christ; and even Trombelli thinks some kind of real paternity necessary to explain Our Blessed Lady's saying to Jesus in the temple: "Thy father and I have sought thee." We see, too, that the angel, without making any distinction,‡ told Joseph and his virgin spouse to name the child; which, according to Saint Augustine,§ implies paternal authority in the holy patriarch.

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* He was the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, and in a perfectly true sense father of the Saviour of the world. (TILLEMONT, I. 33)

† Let us weigh well, too, how beneficent the Almighty showed himself to Saint Joseph; having in such grace disposed the order of his providence that he should be the nearest relative of Mary, already the destined Mother of the Redeemer, and thus made spouse of so great a lady, and in a true sense father of Jesus. This is the third most signal favor accorded to Saint Joseph. The most especial favor to which all the others refer, is that of having been in a most correct sense father of Jesus . . .-Otherwise Mary would not have called him father of Jesus, as she did: "Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (TROMBELLI, *cap.* XXXVIII. *num.* 2. 14.)

‡ "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus;" (Matt. i. 21,) and in Luke i. 31. where it is said to Mary: "Thou shalt bear a son, and call his name Jesus."

§ Paterna auctoritas cum jubetur puero nomen imponere. (ST. AUGUSTINE, Sermo. 51. num. 16.)

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CHAPTER II.

SAINT JOSEPH, BY HIS TITLE OF FATHER AND GUARDIAN OF JESUS, IS EXALTED ABOVE THE GREATEST SAINTS OF THE CHURCH.

I SHALL set down nothing in this chapter that has not been written by the historians of Saint Joseph. Father Suarez, whose words are cited in the first part of this book, regards the father of Jesus as placed in the hypostatic order, and as an exception to those clauses, which, in consequence of their sacred ministry, place Saint John the Baptist and the Apostles in the highest grade in the church. The Abate Trombelli,* although

* St. Joseph had doubtless all the merits of the Apostles, for he too had a share in the temptations, that is, in the sufferings of Christ; he will therefore partake of the table of Jesus Christ, and his authority in judging the tribes of Israel or the whole human race. (TROMBELLI, *pt. I. ch.* xlv. *num.* 13.)



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he shows no doubt in thus preferring Saint Joseph, nevertheless exposes in this shape the reasons which convince him of his primacy among all the saints. Various persons concurred in the fulfilment of God's designs for the redemption of the human race. In the first place the patriarchs, begetting the progenitors of the future Liberator who was to be born in the fulness of time. In the second place the prophets, who foretold the Redeemer with all the circumstances of his life. In the third place, some who were chosen by God as co-operators, and ministers of that great work, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and liberty of the human race. Among these stand pre-eminent Mary, and Joseph her spouse, in whom, as the holy Fathers assert, we should behold a minister, who with love and fidelity attended to the fulfilment of the providence of Heaven, espousing Mary to defend her honor, and deliver her son Jesus from the hands of King Herod. In the fourth place St. John the Baptist, who pointed out Christ as the sovereign Legislator and Divine Master, and exhorted the people to follow his doctrine : by the very lips of Jesus himself, John was declared to be the holiest born of woman. In the last place concurred in the designs of Heaven those whom Christ employed to establish his Church.

This premised, it is not difficult to see that Saint Joseph excelled in merit the ancient patriarchs, as these only co-operated in the Messias' birth through their descendants, by their faith in the promises made to Abraham and renewed to David. But of Saint Joseph we must speak differently, because to him was allowed, by a most special grace, the honor of father of the Redeemer of the race of Adam, and at the same time the Almighty prepared him from his earliest years, adorning him with virtues corresponding to his ministry and the ancient designs of Heaven as to the Incar-

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nation of the Only-Begotten of the Father. These the church celebrates in the hymn,

"Joseph, pure spouse of that immortal bride,
Who shines in ever virgin glory bright,
Thy praise let all the earth, re-echoing, send
Back to the realms of light." *

Nor is Saint Joseph to be placed merely above the patriarchs: mark attentively the honorable charge which he obtained, and you will see that the Lord wished to recognize him as a Father, Divine Providence giving him in Jesus what the order of nature confers on others. The Man-God called him "Father," and obeyed him, yielding with reverence to his direction; and Joseph, on the other hand, assisted him by defending his life and bringing him up like his own son. The office or duty of the Precursor was to manifest to the world the excellence and divinity of that Jesus, whom Saint Joseph had protected and educated. Let us weigh well the duties of the two, and we cannot hesitate in declaring Joseph's office more excellent than that of Saint John, the holy precursor of Christ. From what we have thus far said, we may infer that Saint Joseph should be preferred even to the Apostles, whom the Baptist excelled at least in merit.

Let us now pass to the Apostles and examine their ministry. The dignity of the Apostles consists in their having been chosen by Christ for the establishment of his Church, and their having been employed in promulgating the Gospel; but this employ and dignity did not make them greater than the Mother of God, nor prefer them to Saint Joseph, because

* Te Joseph celebrent agmina cælitum,
Te cuncti resonent Christiadum chori,
Qui, clarus meritis, junctus es inclytæ
Casto fœdere Virgini.

Vesper hymn, feast of St. Joseph.



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the Apostles preached the Redeemer, but Joseph was the co-operator, and if we may borrow the expression of Saint Bernard,* was the coadjutor of the Redemption, and speaking in the words of the Church, he was the minister of man's salvation :

> Thee, as Salvation's minister,
> The mighty Maker chose.†

For the dignity and preference resulting from this sublime office, we have already cited great theologians : it will here suffice to adduce the opinion of Pelbart of Temiswar, a famous theologian during the pontificate of Sixtus IV.,‡ who writes, that Saint Joseph had no equal in sanctity among men. This preference of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God, is not at variance with the sublime eulogium passed by Christ on Saint John the Baptist,§ when he declared that he was the greatest of those born of woman ; because (omitting other explanations which may be found in commentators on this text), this encomium was

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* "Solum denique in terris magni consilii coadjutorem fidelissimum."—"Joseph, in a word, sole and most faithful coadjutor of the great Counsel on earth." (St. Bernard, *Homil. II. super* Missus est.)

† . . . . Dedit et ministrum
Esse salutis.
Matin hymn, feast of St. Joseph.

‡ "Ad quæstionem propositam de sanctitate Joseph, ponitur conclusio responsalis, quam, salvo aliorum meliori judicio, tutam fore decerno, et est talis. Fidei piæ dictamen dat, Virginem Christi Matrem habuisse sponsum talem, Dei ordinatione, ut nullus vir sibi parem habuerit sanctitatem, aut æqualem puritatem toto pro tunc terrarum orbe."—"As to the question concerning Saint Joseph's sanctity, with deference to the better judgment of others, I think the following answer safe. The weight of pious faith is that the Virgin Mother of Christ had, by God's ordination, such a spouse that no man then in the world had sanctity or purity like unto his." (Pelbart, *Stellarium*, Lib. VIII. part. 4, art. 3, cap. 3.)

§ There hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist. (Matt. xi. 11.)

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not so general as to include persons belonging to the hypostatic order. Hence this and similar clauses are not to be understood of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, nor Saint Joseph, father of Jesus and minister of our Redemption. It is true that the Church in the Litany of the Saints names Saint John the Baptist before Saint Joseph ; but she does this, as theologians tell us,* so as not to declare the supremacy of Saint Joseph authentically without a rigorous examination. And besides, precedency in the Litany is no conclusive argument of greater merit : as otherwise the Apostles, who are invoked after the Patriarchs and Prophets, would be of less dignity and merit. To Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Jesus Christ and head of the Church, might with more probability be attributed a primacy among the saints ; but as this great Apostle is not believed to be greater in dignity than the Mother of God, so it cannot be said that he is greater than Saint Joseph, the substitute of the Eternal Father, and foster-father of Jesus. All these reasons, which are truly efficacious, are proposed by Trombelli, and yet he says that he dare not decide that controversy. Stephen Binet,† confident of the rare greatness of him who governed his pen, is not so timid, but declares warmly in favor of Saint Joseph, as we see in the following passage : "All that is great and singular in others, we find united in Saint Joseph and more. Let us gather the flowers of this matter, dwelling on the point for some time. It is certain that Saint Peter received a supreme power from Heaven : to him were given the two keys, one to open Heaven, the other to close it : under his authority did Christ place the government of the Church, constituting him His Vicar. Peter did Our Lord

* Trombelli, Part. I. ch. 44.

† Binet, *Portrait des faveurs divins faits à Saint Joseph.*

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commission to feed his sheep and lambs: a truly great office; but, withal, I say that it cannot be compared with the favor done Saint Joseph. I confess that the Almighty did not give this saint the two keys, for these are put even in the hands of servants: but God put in his charge Jesus and Mary, who are the two gates of Paradise. Saint Peter fed the sheep and lambs; Joseph the Shepherd himself and his Mother, the Virgin Mary, and under his authority as spouse of the Mother of God, and father of Jesus, had the Queen of Heaven and the very Lord of the universe. Saint Peter governed the Church and Saint Joseph the very Head of the Church. Peter loved Christ as his Lord, Joseph as his Lord and his Son. . . . Let us pass from great men to angels. I know that Saint Michael has the glory of being the valiant defender of the Incarnate Word and of the rights of the Divinity which daring Lucifer would have usurped, but I know that Saint Joseph, by a retreat exposed to the hardships of a dangerous journey and helplessness among strangers, delivered the Saviour from another cruel demon, King Herod, who sought the life of the new-born God. We must, indeed, feel most grateful to the Archangel Gabriel for all his care in the Incarnation of the Son of God, giving to the world the tidings of its speedy deliverance: but yet it is evident that the Word made man engaged the first attention of Saint Joseph. The angel announced our future happiness: but Joseph put his advice in execution, facing danger, toil and fear. Angels in one instance fed Our Lord in the desert; but this service they rendered only once and with no toil on their part; Joseph maintained Jesus from his cradle to the age of thirty,* laboring night and day to fulfil the obligation

* De quo enim tam proprie sicut de Joseph potest dicere Christus: *Esurivi et dedisti mihi manducare*, (Matt xxv. 35.) (Suarez, Tom. II. in 3. part, disp. 8, Sect. 1.)

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which his ministry imposed upon him. . . . But let us leave these similitudes, lest by comparing him with others, we lessen that which is in its dignity incomparable. Where shall we find in the universe one who has had the honor of being the true spouse of the Virgin Mary, or being styled the father of the Man-God? To what angel did Jesus ever say as he did to Saint Joseph, 'Thou art my father?' By this name did Christ address his Eternal Father, and after his Eternal Father Saint Joseph, as the substitute, delegate and representative of that Father, who vouchsafed to choose him as his companion in paternity, communicating in some sort that glory which the Father would not give to another,* till Saint Joseph espoused the Mother of his Only-Begotten. The Holy Ghost also put him in his stead, giving him as a consort to his spouse, and by this title Saint Joseph became the guardian angel of Mary's honor and Mary's fame, presumptive heir of Jesus, and master of his treasures, as one constituted lord of all the possessions of the house of God. That is to say, that Joseph, as father of Jesus, was constituted prince and lord of the goods and possessions of him, who, in consequence of the marriage publicly contracted with the Virgin Mary, was reputed his son. And was not all this, being like a deity on earth, attaining a degree more sublime than that of the angels? Saint Thomas said that being Mother of God was an almost infinite dignity: † why, then, may we not say that Saint Joseph's paternity was in a certain manner infinite, as the greatest grandeur after that of Mother of God is that of putative father of Jesus?" Nor does this opinion, supported by great theologians, lack the authority of the Canonized Saints. "Saint Joseph," says the illustri-

* I will not give my glory to another. (Isaias xlii. 8.)

† St. Thomas, I. part. q. 25. art. 4.

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ous Bishop of Geneva, Saint Francis de Sales, " surpassed the Angels and Saints in purity. For if, by being exposed for a few days only to the heat of the material sun, the lily acquires its dazzling whiteness ; who can conceive the extraordinary degree of purity to which Saint Joseph was exalted, exposed as he was day and night, for so many years, to the rays of the sun of Justice, and of that mystical moon which derives her splendors from Him ? "

To all this we may add that Saint Joseph was not only the delegate of the Father, but also in some sort, if we may venture to use the words of Gerson,* the Holy Ghost was his vicar and substitute ! as with the consent of the most holy spouse of Mary, He produced in her pure womb the admirable work of our redemption and salvation. This honor, joined to the title of Father of Jesus, which he acquired by the Holy Ghost's acting in his stead, and his being head and superior of the Holy Family, if they do not prove a greatness surpassing that of all the blessed, at least justify us from all charge of rashness in conceding as probable that primacy which radiates from his dignity and ministry, as the sun shines amid the stars of the firmament.‡

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* Quando enim quilibet præest melioribus, tanto major ipse et honestior est. (*Authentic. de defensoribus civitatis, tit.* 2, *novel.* 15.)



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CHAPTER III.

OF THE OTHER TITLES WHEREWITH ST. JOSEPH IS ENNOBLED.

THE dignity of the spouse of Mary and father of Jesus gave Saint Joseph the third title whereby his dignity and pre-eminence among the Saints is adorned. This prerogative was the glory of having been the first in some deeds worthy of the highest estimation. It is commonly said that the first-born, and the first in any order—for example, the first man, the first martyr, the first apostle, the first angel, enjoy certain advantages in glory over others who have not the same priority.* The holy patriarch was the first man who knew and adored his son Jesus Christ ; the first who had the honor of serving him ; the first who spoke to him ; the first who suffered

* "Præcipuus videtur esse, qui primus est."—"He seems to be more exalted who is the first." (ST. AUGUSTINE, *Serm. de S. Stephano.*)





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hardship and exile for Jesus ; the first apostle who manifested the Saviour to the world, and announced him in Egypt ; the first who made a vow or profession of virginity ; the first Christian ; the first by whom Jesus was offered to His Eternal Father in the temple ; the first to whom was manifestly revealed the mystery of the Incarnation, hidden for so many centuries. Joseph was the first-born of the Church, and for this reason the first in gifts, and the greatest in authority and empire, like Ruben,* to whom his father Jacob left at his death the greater part of his inheritance. All these advantages of having been the first, give Joseph so many degrees of pre-eminence among the Saints, and all but render his grandeur infinite. Combined with that of his most holy spouse, they form an order and a hierarchy exceeding all the blessed. Finally, Saint Joseph was the first defender of the virginal purity of the Mother of God.†

The fourth title was that of Lord, which he obtained by being head of the family which Heaven placed under his orders. He was in some sort Lord of Christ as man,‡ because Joseph being by his espousals head of the family and master of the body of the Blessed Virgin, he must have had all the rights of Lord and father with regard to Jesus. The Mother of God and Queen of Saints addressed him by the name of Lord, as Gerson advanced in presence of the Fathers of the Council of Constance in that discourse, which shows on the one hand the profound humility of Mary, and on the other the sublime and incomparable greatness of the spouse.

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* Excelling in gifts, greater in command. (Genesis xlix. 3.)

† Promptissimus defensor fuit contra derogantes virginitati meæ. (St. Bridget, *Revelation, Lib. VI. cap.* 59.) Joseph patronus Virginis. (Albertus Magnus *in cap.* ii. *Lucæ.*)

‡ Joseph had all the rights of a master and father over Jesus as man. (Tirinus, *in cap.* 1. *Matth.* v. 16.)

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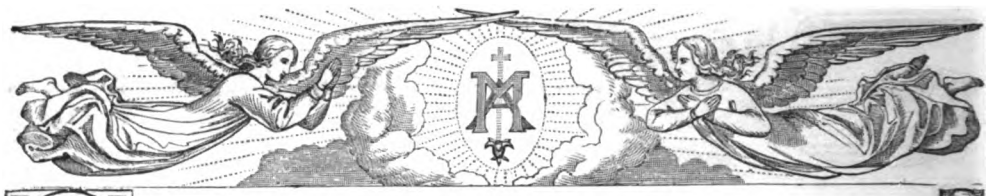
"Let me here exclaim: O Joseph, how wonderful thy sublimity! O incomparable dignity that the Mother of God, the Queen of heaven, the Mistress of the world, should not disdain, O great Joseph, to call thee Lord! Truly, I know not, O orthodox Fathers, which is most admirable here, the humility of Mary or the sublimity of Joseph."* By this title of Lord, or properly of persons belonging to the Lord, the Oriental Christians from the earliest times, as we are assured by Saint John Chrysostom,† styled all the relatives of Jesus. Saint Joseph doubtless, as so nearly related to Christ, was also honored with this title: but even conceding that antiquity did not render him this honor, fearing the abuse and obstinate malice of heretics, who pretended that he was father of Jesus by nature, he is nevertheless entitled to this term, which is inseparable from his dignity and ministry, and we should not withhold it, following the example of Christ, of his most holy Mother, and of the Church, which styles him Master or Lord of the house of God, and Prince in all the states and possessions of his Lord. Other nations do not honor the holy patriarch with the title of Lord. Heaven perhaps has reserved this glory for Mexico, theatre of devotion and magnificent homage to Saint Joseph, where this glorious saint is never named without the illustrious title of Lord,‡ and Mexicans even think themselves

* Licet hic exclamare: O miranda prorsus, Joseph, sublimitas tua! O dignitas incomparabilis, ut Mater Dei, Regina cæli, Domina mundi, appellare te *Dominum* non indignum putaverit! Nescio sane, Patres Orthodoxi, quid hic amplius habeant mirabilis, vel humilitas in Maria, vel in Joseph sublimitas. (GERSON.)

† Certe diu cognati ejus admiratione fuerunt ubique et Desposyni appellati. (ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Hom. XXI. in Joannem.*)

‡ The Mexicans always style St. Joseph, "Señor San José." Señor originally meant Lord, but has lost much of the original dignity attached to the term, and it is therefore difficult to translate precisely the expression "Señor San José." In France formerly the term "Madame" was applied to the Blessed Virgin.—*Trans.*

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wanting in respect, if they withhold this title of reverence. Mexico! Mexico! O my beloved country, thou art that most flourishing empire, which since that epoch, most happy for thee and propitious for thy sons, when under the protection and standards of the Catholic kings the first rays of Christianity dawned within thy walls, hast signalized thyself in honoring the most worthy spouse of Mary and reputed father of the Man-God with the glorious and noble title of Lord. This custom may not please those who do not give it to God's Saints; but I know that the Mexicans have in their favor the celebrated Cardinal of Cambray, the master of John Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris; for, as his Eminence writes: "Worthy of great honor from men, do we think Saint Joseph, whom the King of kings chose to exalt with so many signal honors." *

To the titles of which we have hitherto spoken, we may add that preference which, next to Mary, Jesus gave him in his Sacred Heart, as Saint Joseph thus has the glory of being second in His love, his spouse, the Mother of God being the first. This affection was prophesied even before the birth of this glorious Saint, and in some sort had begun to be accomplished in that Joseph † who, as being a type of the putative father of Jesus, was the most beloved of all the sons of Jacob. Christ's "delight is to be with the children of men:" ‡ and of these, who was more worthy of being the principal object of his delight, than Joseph, who was the man in whom God confided, to whom the Holy Ghost intrusted his spouse, and in whose hands and protection the

* Dignum arbitramur Sanctum Josephum ab hominibus valde honorandum, quem Rex regum tot honorum insignibus voluit extollere. (CARDINALIS CAMERACENSIS, *Tract de S Josepho.*)

† Now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons. (Genesis xxxvii. 3.)

‡ My delights are to be with the children of men. (Proverbs viii. 31.)



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Father intrusted the two jewels that he loved above all? The emperor Titus Vespasian was styled the most beloved in the world, and the delight of the human race.* In this encomium flattery has no small part, for it is liberal in applause in order to open the way by adulation to honors or to show gratitude for favors received. Justly however is Saint Joseph applauded with this praise by the pen of his panegyrist Saint Ephrem,† in whose celebrated writings the spouse of the Mother of God is depicted, as the paradise of delight to Christ, to angels, and to men. This love Jesus did not conceal in the secrecy of his breast: he manifested it to Saint Joseph, at one time revealing to him the power of his divinity,‡ which he concealed from the eyes of the world, and at another time, as Bernardine de Bustos tells us,§ transfiguring himself into a glorious body in presence of his beloved father Saint Joseph. The marks of his singular love began on earth and continued in heaven: where, according to Saint Bernardine of Sienna, Christ gives the ultimate perfection to his filial respect and reverence towards his father Saint Joseph.‖ Christ was not content to love him merely as a

* Optimus princeps fuit, populoque Romano adeo charus, ut vulgo orbis amor et deliciæ humani generis diceretur. (SUETONIUS, *Vitæ Imperatorum.*)

† Joseph paradisus deliciarum. (ST. EPHREM, *De laudibus Virginis.*)

‡ "Filius meus sic occultabat Deitatis suæ potentiam, ut nisi a me, et quandoque a Joseph, sciri non posset."—"My Son so concealed his Divinity, that it could not be known but by me, and at times by Joseph." (ST. BRIDGET, *Revel.* Lib. VI. cap. 58.)

§ Not once, but frequently, as it is piously believed, did Jesus show himself to St. Joseph in a glorious body. (BERNARDINE DE BUSTOS, *Serm.* 12. *de Desponsatione.*)

‖ "Dubitandum non est, quod Christus familiaritatem, reverentiam et sublimissimam dignitatem, quam exhibuit illi, dum ageret in humanis tanquam filius, Patri suo in cœlis utique non negavit, sed potius complevit et consummavit."—"There is no doubt but that Jesus refuses not to his father Saint Joseph the familiarity, reverence and sublime dignity, which, as a son, he accorded him while

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father ; he appeared to Saint Margaret of Cortona, to declare to her, that it was his will that some special reverence should be daily paid to Saint Joseph, who had nurtured him in this world.*

Next to the favor of the Son are the marks of reverence wherewith the Mother of Jesus honored her holy spouse. Mary and Joseph, it would seem, vied with each in marks of love and respect. Never has the world seen, nor will it ever see spouses so concurrent in the union of their wills. I will give a trait of the harmony of these two hearts, borrowing the pen of the eloquent Patrignani,† for in such sublime matters I deem it better to follow the thoughts of others than my own. "Joseph, with the Blessed Virgin," as Theophilus says,‡ "acted rather as a father than husband : and the Blessed Virgin, who would not be outdone in respect by such a spouse, acted as a most loving daughter to a father, making him the master of the treasure of her affections, and consecrating to him her free will. The Blessed Virgin was ready at the insinuations of his lips, and served him, divining, as we say, the very thoughts of her spouse : for as Our Lady revealed to St. Bridget, she did not disdain to wait upon Saint Joseph and prepare him all he needed.

"The Blessed Virgin's respect for her spouse does not cease in heaven : she has come down to exhort the faithful servants of the Lord to honor Saint Joseph. In her holy house of Loretto, speaking to Father Balthasar Alvarez, she told him

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on earth, but rather that he completes and consummates it." (St. Bernardine of Sienna, *Serm. de Sancto. Josepho.*)

* Volo ut omni die specialem facias reverentiam laudum Beatæ Virgini et Sancto Josepho, devotissimo Nutritio meo. (Bollandus, *ad diem* 22. *Februarii.*)

† Patrignani, Lib. I. cap. ii.

‡ Beatus Joseph in Beata Virgine tuenda patris curam exhibuit. (Theophilus, *in Epist. ad Galatas, cap.* i.)

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to choose her spouse Saint Joseph as his special advocate and protector. Our Lady also took from one of her devout clients her name by which he was known in the Premonstratensian order, and gave him that of Joseph. In the city of Naples, she commanded a Moor who was about to be baptized, to take the name of Joseph, in memory of her most amiable spouse. The Blessed Virgin bestowed many graces on Saint Teresa, as we see by her life, and made her a special gift, for her zeal in promoting the glory of her spouse. She showed Saint Gertrude * the throne of glory on which her consort Saint Joseph is seated, and the demonstrations of respect and reverence, with which all the Saints bowed the head to St. Joseph."

The Abate Trombelli,† in the following eloquent words, describes other special graces with which Saint Joseph is honored in heaven. "To Joseph and Mary alone, of all mortals, was expressly revealed the divinity of Christ; and indeed these two illustrious personages had a greater light as to the profound mystery of the Incarnation, than the most celebrated prophets of the Hebrew nation. . . Joseph had a particular assistance from God to shield the life of Jesus from snares and dangers. He had the honor and glory of beholding with his own eyes those magnificent events, whereby Heaven vouchsafed to manifest the excellence and dignity of Jesus, before he began his mission. He heard the melodious strains of the angelic hosts, who came down to celebrate the Saviour's birth. Joseph was present at the adoration of the Wise Men, and soon after heard in the temple the prophecy of Saint Simeon, who declared in his presence that the new-born child was the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of the people of Israel. Others heard the

* St. Gertrude, *Revelations, Lib. IV. cap.* xii.
† Trombelli, *Life of St. Joseph, Part. I. ch.* xxxviii.



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words of Simeon, but only Joseph and Mary knew their purport. Joseph had frequent visits from angels. Mary believed, and not without strong ground, that Saint Joseph did not doubt the Angel's message, which contained things above the order of nature (such as a Virgin's conceiving through the operation of the Holy Ghost, and Herod's desire of killing the child), because he was accustomed to the converse of angels. . . . . Other favors result from his ministry, among which the Fathers and theologians admire and eulogize that power which divine Providence gave him over Jesus, who was Monarch of the Universe, and over Mary, who was that Monarch's mother, and thus Queen of Angels, the noblest of all creatures. This constitutes in Joseph an excellence so superior, that a greater one cannot even be imagined."

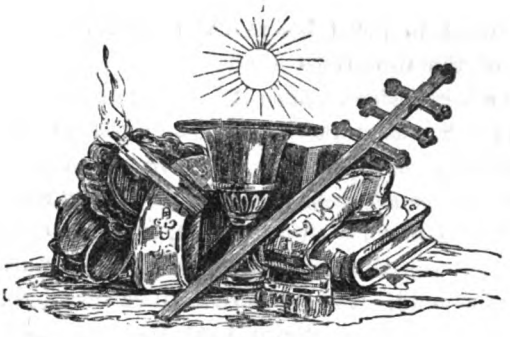
The Blessed Virgin witnessed what Joseph saw and heard. "Often," said Our Lady to Saint Bridget,* "we beheld Jesus encompassed by wonderful light, and heard the music with which the angels delighted him." Of the favors with which the sovereign spirits honored Saint Joseph in this world, interpreters of Scripture † have availed themselves to say that the angels, by the delights which they experienced in the converse of the Saint, sought occasions to address him,‡ and that from the pleasure which they felt in admiring the greatness of his faith in the profound mysteries, and beholding the peace and serenity of his heart in the most trying times, gave him the orders of Heaven on various occasions.

* Vidimus lumen admirabile multoties circumfulsisse eum, et angelicas voces cantantes super eum audivimus. (St. Bridget, *Revel. Lib. VI. ch.* lviii.)

† So delighted were the angels with Joseph, that they sought opportunities to enjoy his frequent converse. (Silveira, Tom. I. Lib. I. ch. x. q. 3.)

‡ Non determinat angelus, quo loco terræ Israel, ut dubitante Joseph, iterum revertatur."—"The angel does not determine the spot in the land of Israel, that Joseph may be in doubt, and he be compelled to return." (St. Anselm, *Comment. in Matt. cap.* xi. v. 20, 22. See Patrignani, Lib. I. c. iii.)

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CHAPTER IV.

EULOGIUMS OF THE CHURCH ON SAINT JOSEPH.—WHETHER HE IS TO BE CLASSED AMONG THE MARTYRS OR DOCTORS.

SAINT Ambrose says that the hero most worthy of praise is he whom all can applaud,* and Pliny tells us that there is nothing more easy than to extol true merit.† These two writers thought not of Saint Joseph in uttering these sentiments; but speaking with justice, who will deny that all may worthily and most easily employ their panegyrics on this great Saint? His honorable titles, with the favors bestowed upon him by Heaven, and the order in which he was placed, are enough to give eloquence even to him who is slow of speech and sterile of ideas. "I am offered a cause in which the most ignorant cannot but be sublimely eloquent," said Cicero

* Nemo est laudabilior, quam qui ab omnibus laudari potest. Quot homines, tot præcones. (SAINT AMBROSE, *De Virginibus.*)

† Merenti gratias agere facile est. (PLINY, *Panegyric on Trajan.*)

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when he went to plead before the Roman Senate the great qualities of the illustrious Pompey. "The subject of my oration is a hero, whose praise it is easy to begin, but difficult to conclude." * More justly may I adorn this chapter of the history of Saint Joseph with the sentence of Cicero, as we know that the panegyrists of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God have, with great ease, from the abundance of the matter, begun their encomiums, and till now their praises have found no end. It is true that all say great things; but yet we must believe, as Saint John Damascenus confesses,† that they leave unsaid much more than they utter. The Church has left least to say, calling the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God, the honor of the Blessed, the pillar of the world, the hope of our life, a man most happy, and so wonderfully blessed on earth as to equal the angels. Joseph, says the Church, is that giant spirit, who ever comes forth victorious from the abyss, and who by his merits is entitled to the eulogiums of all Christianity, and the glory of being spouse of her who was the true Mother of God. By these same eulogies the Church confirms the opinion that it is easier to begin, than to close our praises of that illustrious man, whom the Gospel extols by the name of *Just*.

It has been discussed whether Saint Joseph can be numbered among the martyrs, and we will now consider the question. This word *martyr*, which means a witness, has, from the primitive ages of the church, been applied to those Christians who either suffered torments or sacrificed their own life in testimony of faith. Among these, some were cited by pagan

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* Dicendum est enim de Cn. Pompeii singulari, eximiaque virtute; hujus autem orationis difficilius est exitum, quam principium invenire. (CICERO, pro lege Manilia.)

† SAINT JOHN DAMASCENUS, *Oratio III. de Nativitate Virginis.*

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judges to justify their belief, and were anciently called confessors, when they publicly confessed the faith of Jesus Christ. Others, without being cited, appeared before the tyrant to confess the religion which they embraced, and to these was given the name of professors of the faith. Both classes are styled by Tertullian and Saint Cyprian, men already adorned with the devise and character of martyrdom. The same Fathers give the name of martyrs to those who survived the torments suffered for the confession of Jesus Christ. This was the style of the ancient Fathers, whose words the reader will find cited in the work of Dominic Macri; * but the usage of the Church in our days, is to call confessors, those who die after a holy life, and martyrs, those who shed their blood for the faith. The Almighty rewards the fortitude of these heroic souls by a special bliss, which theologians explain by the stamp and symbol of the laureola, a figure taken from those laurel wreaths with which the ancients encircled the brows of those who had obtained any victory. The Church in its hymns gives Saint Joseph the glorious name of conqueror; † but this victory, without having first shed his blood for Jesus Christ, does not entitle him to the laurel of what is commonly called martyrdom. Isidore Isolano, Reiss, and other theologians whom Trombelli cites,‡ concede to Saint Joseph the laurel and all the honors of

* Dominicus Macri, *Hierolexicon*, verbo *Confessor, Martyr.*

† Hinc stygis victor, laqueo solutus
Carnis, ad sedes placido sopore
Migrat æternas, rutilisque cingit
Tempora sertis.

Loosed from his fleshy chain, Hell's victor fleets
As in calm sleep away;
And diademed with light enters the seats
Of everlasting day.

‡ Trombelli, *Part. I. cap.* xlvi. *num.* 1.

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martyrdom. Modern critics are less liberal; and say with Theophilus Raynaud,* that the laurel of martyrdom given to the Father of Jesus, was a rhetorical exaggeration of the eloquent Isolano. Did I not fear to displease those who idolize the great luminaries of this age, I would declare myself in favor of Isolano, an enlightened theologian, and not as far from sound criticism, as the dwellers at the poles are from the sun. But if I do not openly concede this laurel to the holy patriarch, I will not deny some honors of martyrdom to him who, as the Gospel tells us, departed an exile for Jesus' sake from the realm of Herod, and who for some years lived subject to constant calamities, which exile naturally entails. If perchance my meaning is not evident, the error is not mine, but that of the celebrated Rupert,† who says, that Joseph was the first who suffered persecution for justice' sake; to such an extent that the sword of grief made its ravages on his heart. The illustrious Anthony Perez affirms ‡ more than Rupert; for he says that Saint Joseph did not lack martyrdoms, and that the Saint was resolved to suffer them. And who will deny that a Joseph, spouse of that Virgin who, according to the sentiment of some theologians,§ was a martyr, wanting nothing of what properly constitutes martyrdom, had no share in any of her pains, when she was, if not all, at least half of his heart? Saint Bernard,‖ speaking of the soul of the Blessed Virgin, calls her a Martyr, both when

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* Raynaud, *Diptych. Marian. part. I. punct.* 4.

† Primus iste persecutionem propter justitiam passus est, ita ut ferrum ejus animam pertransiret. (Rupert, *in cap.* ii. *Matth.*)

‡ Non illi defuere martyria, aut ille martyriis. (Perez, *cap.* xxxix. *in Matth.*)

§ Aliis simpliciter videtur Beatam Virginem vere ac proprie habere laureolam martyrii. (Suarez, Tom. II. in 3. part. disp. 22 § 4.)

‖ Martyrium Virginis tam in Simeonis prophetia, quam in ipsa Dominicæ Passionis historia commendatur. (Saint Bernard, *Serm. de duodecim stellis.*)

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she heard Simeon's prophecy, and when she beheld the torments of her Son Jesus. Had this Saint had occasion to speak of Saint Joseph in the same connection, he would have said the same ; for Joseph, having perfectly understood the prophecy of Simeon, could not but have been transpierced in soul at the thought of the sufferings that awaited her who was the charm of his existence. Saint Bernardine of Sienna * thinks that the Almighty ordained that Saint Joseph should die before the passion of Our Lord, that the grief of seeing Him suffer and die amid the ignominies of the Cross, might not martyrize his affections. This is a strong proof that Saint Joseph was ready to suffer the same martyrdom as his most holy spouse, the Mother of the Man-God, as well as an argument in favor of numbering him among those Saints whom ancient writers † call *bloodless martyrs* (martyres sine sanguine), since, suffering for Christ, they had not the glory of dying in testimony of the faith.

It has again been asked whether Saint Joseph can be enrolled among the Doctors of the Church. To be entitled to a place among the illustrious men whom the Church styles Doctors, it is necessary to have extirpated, either with the tongue or with the pen, some error which has taken possession of the human heart, or established a dogma of our faith. Some writers, both ancient and modern, think ‡ that

* "Voluit Deus ipsum mori ante Dominicam Passionem, ne in morte Christi immenso dolore cruciaretur."—"God willed that Saint Joseph should die before Our Lord's passion, lest in Christ's death he should be overwhelmed with the agony of boundless grief." (Saint Bernardine of Sienna, *Serm. de Sancto Josepho, Tom. IV. art. 2. cap. 3.*)

† Tertullian, *ad Martyres*, St. Cyprian, *De lapsis*, Baronius, *in Martyrologio Romano, ad diem secundum Januarii, litera h.*

‡ Isolanus, *Summa de donis Sancti Joseph. part. 4. cap. 4* Bernardinus de Bustos, *in Mariali, part. 4. serm. 12.* Carthagena, Tomo IV. Libro xviii p. 521. P. Reiss, *Auctor Josephinæ Lucernensis elogio 53.*

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Saint Joseph combines these qualities, and is therefore entitled to the honor. If the holy patriarch did not altogether establish the Catholic religion, he, at least, they say, drew some lines towards its establishment, as is shown by the task which he assumed of announcing to the shepherds and the Wise Men the excellence of the Infant Saviour, and to the Egyptians the principles of that faith which was to rise upon the ruins of their idols,—idols that already felt the effects of His presence who came to turn their worship to contempt. Hence arose, it is credible, that slight and almost imperceptible opposition, which Saint Mark experienced among the Egyptians when he went to preach the gospel to them, as we read in his life. While in Nazareth, Saint Joseph instructed his neighbors by the communication of those hallowed lights which the words and example of the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, infused into his soul, and with other edifying actions, whereby this Saint, as a coadjutor in the great counsel of human redemption, imprinted on their souls the piety and first sentiments of the faith which Jesus was to preach to them, on completing his thirtieth year.

John Gerson * in some verses, which are no mean proof of the taste of the Latin poets of that age, writes that Saint Joseph disputed with learned reasoning on the true religion against the elders of the city of Tanais in Egypt. This does not confirm the thought of those who invest Saint Joseph with the title of Doctor; for Gerson here evidently uses the poet's license to mingle this controversy with true facts attested by the Gospel and ancient tradition. These are the proofs alleged by the authors whom we have named in favor

* His super, atque aliis docto sermone putandum est
Disseruisse Joseph de vera religione
Cum senibus Tanais.

GERSON, *Josephina*.

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of the honor. Theophilus Raynaud admits them,* and nevertheless says, that he is not convinced by the arguments of those theologians who maintain it, inasmuch as a far different mode of instructing the people is required by the Church to obtain the praise and title of Doctor. "The exhortations which good men occasionally make in a few words, do not suffice," says Raynaud; "a diffuse and permanent instruction is necessary, adorned with solid doctrine and discourses no less efficacious than proportioned to the teaching of the people and the extirpation of error. Some maintain that Saint Joseph did all that is necessary for the honors of a Doctor; but few have believed it; on the contrary, most think that Saint Joseph, knowing that the hour for the conversion of the Egyptians had not arrived, refrained from addressing any eloquent exhortations to them." Such is the opinion of Theophilus Raynaud; but neither this critic nor the moderns who follow him, will deny that Saint Joseph was a man of excellent wisdom. Saint John Chrysostom † says in all distinctness, that the spouse of the Mother of God bore himself in all the vicissitudes of life, like a true philosopher, showing himself well versed in all the maxims of that science. Saint Bernard, comparing him with that ancient Joseph,‡ who, in the court of Egypt, was reputed the most learned man of the kingdom, says § that Joseph, spouse of Mary and father of Jesus, represented in that minister of Pharao, had loftier things in his intellect. The one inter-

* Th. Raynaud, *Diptyc. Marian.* part. I. punct. 4.

† "Hic itaque multam ostendit philosophiam . . . vidisti (Josephum) philosophum virum." (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. IV. in Matt.* i.; *Hom. IV. in Matt.* vii.)

‡ Genesis xli. 39.

§ Illi data est intelligentia in mysteriis somniorum, isti conscium fieri atque participem cælestium sacramentorum. (Saint Bernard, *Hom. II. Super Missus est.*)

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preted dreams, the other was admitted to the understanding of the most profound mysteries. The illustrious Perez * compares Joseph to the ancient prophets, and declares that Joseph, even in sleep, knew more than the prophets awake. The illustrious Suarez † proves by the same gospel, that Saint Joseph was often enlightened by angelic converse and prophetic revelations. Saint Hilary and Saint Thomas do not give this great Patriarch the title of Doctor; but they consider him in his ministry an image of the apostles.‡ Cardinal D'Ailly does not concede him all the laurels with which the various Saints are honored in the Church, but gives him the glory of being the first Evangelist.§ Others, finally, do not give him the title of Doctor, but compensate by ascribing to him the honor of Patriarch and Prophet,‖ which is a title more brilliant and illustrious; because patriarch, speaking of Saint Joseph, means that he was reputed father of that Jesus, who is the Head of the Elect, that is, of those chosen to possess the ultimate bliss of heaven.

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* Joseph plus dormiens de sapientia, quam vigilantissimi Prophetarum obtinuit. (PEREZ in Matth i., ii.)

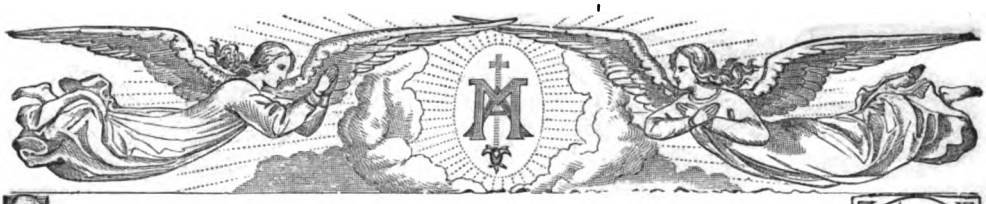
† Ex Evangelio habemus (Josephum) recepisse interdum angelicas illustrationes et propheticas revelationes. (SUAREZ, Tom. II. in 3. part. Disp. 8. § 2.)

‡ Joseph enim Apostolorum tenet speciem, quibus Christus circumferendus est creditus. (ST. THOMAS, citing St. Hilary, in Matth. ii.)

§ Angelus evangelizavit pastoribus: Sanctus Joseph publice et solemniter omnibus; unde non immerito eum Evangelistam possumus nominare, qui primus nomen Evangelistæ meruit obtinere. (CARDINALIS CAMARACENSIS, *Tract. de Sancto Josepho.*)

‖ Jam vero, quidquid Guyet senserit, Sanctus Josephus Patriarcha dicendus est, cum Christi, qui electorum Caput est, Pater reputatus fuerit, Propheta quoque dici potest. (BENEDICT XIV. *de Beatificatione* et Canonizatione Sanctorum. Lib. IV. part II.)

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CHAPTER V.

OF THE GIFTS AND VIRTUES OF SAINT JOSEPH, AND HIS SINGULAR PERFECTION IN EACH.



GOD adorns the persons whom he chooses with the qualities proportioned to the ministry and fulfilment of his providences. He endowed the first Joseph,* who was chosen to be the Saviour of the kingdom of Egypt during the calamitous reign of Pharao, with surpassing wisdom, and all the qualities which form a great minister of state. He marked Moses from his birth by a name † which was the description of his destiny; he educated him as a prince in Pharao's palace, and by admirable skill, made him on the one hand replete with that gentleness necessary for the head and chief-

* Genesis xli. 34.

† Exodus ii. 10.



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tain of a malcontent and stiff-necked people, and on the other, with an energy and resolution capable of gainsaying a monarch who rebelled against the decrees of the Almighty. The beauteous form of Moses, says the Hebrew Josephus,* was a confirmation of that divine oracle which had, even before his birth, declared him the Redeemer of that unhappy people, oppressed for more than one hundred and forty years.

If God showed such providence in events not immediately connected with the great interests of his glory, what perfections would not his Omnipotence shower on that Joseph who was born to be the head of the Holy Family? What a gentleness in aspect, what a noble heart, what traits of wisdom, what examples! what genius, what attractions of humanity must not have shone forth in his person! That God who adorned Saul † and others ‡ with a certain splendor of majesty § which made them worthy of the purple, with what virtues and natural gifts would he not endow the heir of the throne of Juda, the spouse of the Virgin Mother of God and Queen of heaven and earth? Justified then by the providence which Eternal Wisdom displays in those whom it selects to carry out its decrees, we must feel convinced that in the reputed father of Jesus concurred all moral virtues; so that all admired in the Saint a virginal modesty worthy of appearing in the presence of the two lilies of Eden, and a star upon earth surrounded by so many magnificent gifts, as divided among thousands would have made even higher spirits more illustrious. This abundance of virtues and natural gifts, required by the selection of Saint

* Josephus, Antiquities, Book II. † I. Kings ix. 2.

‡ Magnificus secundum quod dicitur, quod species Priami digna est imperio. (St. Augustine.)

§ Honor capitis et dignitas oris .. . . nonne longe lateque Principem ostendant? (Pliny, *Panegyric on Trajan.*)

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Joseph, was afterwards signified by Saint Matthew, who, relating in his genealogy of the Spouse of the Mother of God, many kings and high-priests, wished, says Saint John Chrysostom,* to show us that all the virtues and gifts scattered in so many eminent personages, were all united in Saint Joseph in wonderful harmony.

In one word, the Holy Ghost gives us the noblest description of the prodigious virtues of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God. One word is the whole history of his life; but a word which contains such glorious and so countless acts, that we may apply to it the motto which Timanthes put on his paintings: "*Plus intelligitur quam pingitur.*" "Conceive more than you behold." This word is the appellation JUST,† with which the virtues of Saint Joseph are described by Evangelical truth. No description can be more honorable, no eulogy more comprehensive; because this word *Just* in the Gospel, according to the commentators on holy writ,‡ means that Saint Joseph possessed all virtues in the degree of perfection. By this word *Just* are signified those flames of love, by which the holy Patriarch to the last moment of his life accompanied Christ and his holy Mother, undivided from their loving society by sad fears or hardships. It tells us that having that divine charity which Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, afterwards described in such

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* ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilia de S. Joanne Baptista.*

† Joseph her husband, being a just man. (Matt. i. 19.)

‡ "Justum hic in omni virtute dicit esse perfectum."—"Just here means perfect in every virtue." (ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, Hom. ix in Matt. i. 19.)

"But Saint Matthew passes a still higher eulogy, assuring us, that he was a just man (and all know what a difference there is between being just in the opinion of men, and just according to the truth of the Gospel). The Scripture then assuring us that Joseph was just, assures us that he possessed all virtues." (TILLEMONT I. 73.)

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strong and grand expressions,* Saint Joseph was more worthy of praise than Abraham. Of this patriarch Saint Ambrose eloquently writes, that he did more than philosophy dreamed, because he followed the Lord before one of the Seven Wise Men of Athens had uttered the celebrated sentence: "Follow God."† We cannot doubt but that the spouse of the Mother of Jesus did more; both in following Christ, fleeing with him to Egypt ‡ to save him from death, and leaving his native land without receiving from heaven the promises given to the patriarch Abraham; the latter followed the Lord before the philosopher had uttered his maxim, and Saint Joseph followed Christ before the promulgation of the Gospel.

If from the love of God we pass to other virtues signified in this word *Just*, which the Gospel gives us, we shall find in the magnanimous heart of the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, such heroic faith and such constant hope, as to fill the Doctors of the Church with wonder and amazement.§ "O just and holy Joseph," exclaims Cardinal D'Ailly,‖ "how

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* Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress? . . . I am sure that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord. (Rom. viii. 35.)

† Magnus plane vir Abraham . . . quem votis suis Philosophia non æquavit. Denique minus est, quod illa finxit, quam quod iste gessit . . . Hoc autem quod pro magno inter Septem Sapientum dicta celebratur: *Sequere Deum*, perfecit Abraham, factoque Sapientum dicta prævenit. (St. Ambrose, *de Abraham Patriarcha, Lib. I. c.* ii.)

‡ "Tu natum Dominum stringis, ad exteras
Ægypti profugum, tu sequeris plagas."
"Thine arms embraced thy Maker newly born;
With Him to Egypt's deserts didst thou flee."
Vesper Hymn, feast of St. Joseph.

§ Longe majoris obedientiæ fervore Joseph mandatum exequitur, quam Abraham, nam nulla bonorum expectata promissione egreditur. (Chr Sanctolis, *in Matt.* i. cited by Patrignani, Lib. III. ch. iii. § 6.)

‖ Sancte et juste Joseph, quomodo de re tanta, tam inaudita cito firmiter credis? (Card. Camaracensis, *Tract. de Sancto Josepho.*)

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didst thou so quickly and so firmly believe that lofty mystery?" Saint John Chrysostom applauds in these words the hope of this great Saint: * "Joseph, with the orders which he had from heaven to flee from his native land to Egypt, did not change his former sentiments; he did not even say to the Angel, "this flight is contrary to the promises," but hearing the warning, without waiting for the day to break, or any preparation but patience, he set out for that kingdom which had in other days been the theatre of Jewish suffering. His other virtues, all grand and heroic in their sphere, and each in particular, are extolled with singular eulogy by the noblest pens of Christendom. His humility, which was the predominant virtue of his breast, was applauded by the Blessed Virgin his most holy spouse. "God hath exalted the humble," says Our Lady. And who among them was most exalted? Of what humble one did Mary especially speak? For whom, in particular, did the Mother of God intend this honorable appellation? She intended it for her spouse Saint Joseph, according to Cardinal D'Ailly.†

In obedience and conformity to the designs of God, Joseph stands forth so singularly perfect that he has no equal among the great men of eminent sanctity whom the Scriptures portray. The Gospel is the proof of this virtue in Saint Joseph. The Angel of the Lord commanded him not to leave his spouse when he thought of departing from her, and he promptly fulfilled the orders of Heaven without alleging objections or saying a word. In Bethlehem the Angel returns with another commandment of the Almighty, bidding

* Nec unquam passus est scandalum Joseph, nec dixit: contraria sunt facta promissis. (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. I. de Innocentibus.*)

† "*Exaltavit humiles.* Hoc de sponso suo specialiter dixisse credenda. (Card. Camaracensis, *Tract. de Sancto Josepho*)

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him depart with the new-born child and its mother for the land of Egypt, and there remain in exile till he received further orders. And what reply did he make the Angel? We read in the Gospel no reply but obedience in executing the decrees of the Most High. Neither on the road to Egypt, nor during the period of his long stay in that kingdom, did Heaven hear one sigh for his native land, one complaint from his lips. With no such heroic resignation did even the greatest characters in the Scriptures bear up under adversity. David exiled by Saul filled Arabia with his complaints, the days which he spent far from his native land seeming to him centuries.* In his trials he constantly with streaming eyes implored of God comfort and consolation.† Holy Job, a model of patience, asks the Almighty to show him the reason why he is judged so severely.‡ Most patient Joseph alone is silent in his troubles, filling heaven and earth with admiration at his obedience and conformity to the providence of his God.

Coming to the four cardinal virtues, which are prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance, I will say that the father of Jesus was most prudent in his determinations, as he showed when about to leave the Blessed Virgin. His humility thought of leaving her; but secretly, so as not to expose her to dishonor. He wished to enter Judea as he returned from Egypt; but knowing that Archelaus reigned there, he stopped, awaiting guidance from on high. His fortitude was manifested in the constancy with which he bore the many trials of life. Neither the length nor the ruggedness of the

* Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged! (Ps. cxix. 5.)

† My eyes have failed for thy word, saying: When wilt thou comfort me. (Ps. cxviii. 82.)

‡ Tell me why thou judgest me so? (Job x. 2.)

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road to Egypt, nor the inclement season, nor the tender age of the Infant God, nor the delicate state of the Mother, offered any impediment to the execution of what the Angel commanded. His justice is seen in the care and solicitude wherewith he served Jesus and Mary, who by the election of God were under his shadow and protection. His temperance we behold and admire in an immaculate and virginal purity which he preserved to the last instant of his life. To this virtue Saint John Chrysostom * attributes the benignity, mildness and moderation which is resplendent in the most holy spouse of Mary.

What I have hitherto endeavored to say, without succeeding in explaining myself, on account of the sublimity of Saint Joseph's actions, is but the signification of the word *Just* with which the Gospel describes him. What I have been unable to explain, says the Father of the Holy Scriptures, Saint Jerome, is the general word, which attributes to the holy patriarch the perfect possession of all virtues.† Saint Bernardine of Sienna speaks in particular, and makes each of Saint Joseph's virtues the theme of one of the eulogies, with which men applaud those deeds so sublime as to transcend mere praise. The following are his words: "How can a discreet mind think that the Holy Ghost would have united by such a union any soul to the soul of such a Virgin, unless most like her in the practice of virtue? Whence I believe that this most holy man Joseph was most pure in virginity, most profound in humility, most ardent in love of

* "Vide viri moderationem . . . benignus et moderatus erat vir."—"Behold Joseph's moderation; he was a benign and moderate man." (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. IV. in Matth.*)

† "Joseph vocari justum attendite, propter omnium virtutum perfectam possessionem."—"Mark that Joseph is called *Just* on account of his perfect possession of all virtues." (Saint Jerome in Matth. i.)

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God and charity, most high in contemplation, most solicitous for his spouse." * After this magnificent encomium, I shall merely add this eulogy of the eloquent Patrignani: "For my part, I reverence these virtues, and leave to other pens to give them all the light and splendor which their brilliancy deserves, not with ink, but with the rays of the sun. Nor should any one wonder at my saying that these virtues should be described with rays of light, when the eloquence of a Nazianzen, overwhelmed by the glory of the prerogatives and virtues of the father of Jesus, exclaims: 'In Joseph, as a sun, are gathered all the lights of the Saints.'" †

The patience and fortitude of this illustrious patriarch were a spectacle which Wisdom placed in the world as a memorial to posterity and a rare example of constancy. The events of his life should be considered as a continual triumph and exercise of suffering and resistance to the misfortunes which assailed him on all sides. His great mind was never overcome by the adversities which usually crush the strongest; because the Almighty, who in his adorable providence gives the deepest roots to the trees most exposed to the blasts of the storm, fortified this just man with the most seasonable aids, to resist the blows by which his patience and fidelity were tried. The punctual observance of the orders of God, which, as we have already said with Saint John Chrysostom, were, from his fidelity, communicated while he

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* Quomodo cogitare potest mens discreta, quod Spiritus Sanctus tanta unione uniret menti tantæ Virginis aliquam animam, nisi ei virtutum operatione simillimam? Unde credo istum virum, sanctum Joseph, fuisse mundissimum in virginitate: profundissimum in humilitate, ardentissimum in amore Dei et charitate, altissimum in contemplatione, sollicitissimum sponsæ suæ. (St. Bernardine of Sienna, *Serm. de Sancto Josepho, art.* 2. *cap.* 1.)

† In Joseph velut in sole Sanctorum lumina collocavit. (St. Gregory of Nazianzen, cited by Patrignani, Lib. i. c. 10.)

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slept, is delineated in the gospel. There we read that Joseph, through obedience, undertook a flight exposed to the greatest hardships, with no preparation but a heroic resignation to the will of God, who ordered him to leave his native land, and proceed to Egypt with the child Jesus and his mother. The venerable Peter Canisius shows the greatness and the singularity of Saint Joseph's obedience and other virtues in a magnificent eulogy which we cite : Whether Saint Joseph regarded the Mother of Our Lord as a spouse, or, as Saint Bernard thinks, as a Sovereign Mistress, he was certainly ever true to himself, irreprehensible before God and men, truly just, a real descendant of David, no less noble in soul than in race, who degenerated in nothing from his father David, to whom, as to another David, the most High God manifested the uncertain and hidden things of his wisdom ; who was accordingly frequently enlightened in his ministry and the events of his life by divine revelations. Striking too is this commendation of Joseph, that the generation of Christ Our Lord, which was shown to Jacob in his sleep as a long ladder reaching the heavens, is so interwoven by the Evangelist Saint Matthew, that we attain Christ through Joseph ; and the Lord of all seemed in a manner to lean, if I may follow Rupert, on Joseph as the top of the ladder. Did he not lean on the Saint, he says, when an orphan in this world, that is, born without a carnal father, he designed to be supported, himself and his Mother, by his solace ? In addition to this Joseph received an illustrious name, incommunicable to other mortals, in that he is styled in the Gospel father of Christ and husband of Mary ; nor is it doubtful but that he showed himself worthy of each title and honor. . . Moreover, who can easily express in words, how diligent, faithful, untiring and sedulous he was in his ministry, when he had once undertaken the task divinely imposed upon him,



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to be the domestic guardian of such a Mother, and the foster father of such a Son, nay, of his Saviour? What admiration not only seized him, but what holy joy filled him, when he alone of thousands was the intimate witness of the mysteries of God? Saint Luke certainly writes that Mary and Joseph wondered at the events which the aged Saint Simeon foretold of the Infant God. In proportion to the love wherewith he loved Jesus, he felt his sad and mournful lot when he heard that Herod sought that treasure, common to him and his spouse, in order to sacrifice it to the cruelty of his inhuman breast, and to his fear of yielding up the crown to the lawful and presumptive heir of the throne of Judea. The anguish with which he left his beloved country, Israel, for so many centuries the theatre of God's most striking and palpable providence over his people, was great, and lasted at least four years in Egypt, as was also the grief that rent his blessed soul for three days, when Jesus was lost in Jerusalem. What a blow of affliction must it not have been for Saint Joseph, to be unable to afford the Son and Mother all the solace of which they were worthy? As soon as he was warned, during the night, of king Herod's cruel designs, he rose, at once, and unhindered by love of country, friends and kindred, he took the road to Egypt, without preparing suitable provisions for the journey, leaving all to the dispositions of that Providence, in whose loving care he rested. The toil and hardship endured in this sort of exile among the Egyptians, may be conjectured, but cannot easily be described. We know, as Saint Jerome says, that in the flight to Egypt Joseph was the consolation of the Virgin Mother of God, who had been confided to his care. Hence Saint John Chrysostom says, that Joseph was eminent in all his deeds, and distinguished in every kind of virtue, fulfilling with Christ by the orders of Heaven, what a father should do toward a son,



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and he even exceeded the law, for he did more than is commanded.

"The oracles of the prophets were his constant meditation, and hence the Evangelist styles him a just man; that is, according to Hugh Victorinus, he was punctual in the observance of all the law, or observed the law perfectly, as Saint John Chrysostom teaches. Origen, who wrote before Saint John Chrysostom, says that Joseph was just in word and deed, and in the most exquisite observance of the law. The ancient Joseph, minister of Pharao, and figure of the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and foster-father of Jesus, was admired in Egypt for his justice, innocence and fidelity; but this Joseph of whom the Gospel speaks showed himself more admirable, since, besides the virtues common to both, Saint Joseph had as a director an angel who constantly enlightened him, and being a virgin, guarded in all purity the Immaculate Virgin, the Mother of the Man-God, as a treasure confided to his fidelity. The most holy Joseph is, too, most worthy to be preferred to all men, because he was the first who saw the Messias and conversed familiarly with him, and because he saw the fulfilment of the oracles of the Prophets, which the most happy kings of Judea did not attain to see. He was an eye and ear witness of the first miracles, which the holy Evangelists afterwards related. And finally, Joseph was that great spirit, whom, like David, God found a man after his own heart, and in all things obsequious to his designs.

"This is the base of Joseph's virtues and greatness, which Catholics maintain and defend against the unbelievers, who will not understand or pretend not to know what the gospel means by the word *Just*, applied to the most holy spouse of the Mother of God, the ever Blessed Virgin Mary. Caution is however necessary, lest in avoiding heretics who would detract



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from the virtue of the most holy Joseph, we fall like the unwise on another rock. We must not, I mean, exalt Joseph's sanctity so as in any manner to obscure Mary's, as Francis Lampert tells us a certain fanatic did, who losing the light of reason, maintained that Saint Joseph was holier than the Mother of God, simply on the ground that the angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep, and to Mary only when she was awake. The argument is ridiculous and unworthy of an answer, as from the very allegation we infer that Mary was superior to her spouse in sanctity; because it is a greater thing for an angel to appear to one awake than to one asleep, and because it was indisputably more sublime to announce to Mary the Incarnation of the Eternal Word in her womb, than to dispel Joseph's fears as he slept, and instruct him as to other events and the shaping of his destiny. Hence Saint John Chrysostom notes, that the Blessed Virgin must have been illuminated, not in dreams as Joseph was, nor by an obscure revelation like Zachary, but by a most clear vision, for this is in its very nature required by the excellence of that incomprehensible ministry which the angel came to announce to her." *

Saint Joseph was great, and superior to Saint John the Baptist and the Apostles, and had those gifts and privileges of which a Saint is worthy, whose ministry belonged to the hypostatic order; that is, to the order of that union, which of the Divine Word, the second person of the Most Holy

* Sive Joseph pro sponsa, sive ut Bernardus existimat, pro Domina, Domini sui Matrem habuerit, atque tractarit, sui ille perpetuo similis utique vixit, ut coram Deo et hominibus irreprehensibilis, vereque justus et germanus Davidis esset filius, non mente minus quam genere nobilis qui a Patre suo David nihil degeneraret, cui tanquam alteri David, incerta et occulta Sapientiæ suæ summus Deus manifestaret; qui propterea divinis revelationibus in sua procuratione, rebusque gerendis crebro illustrabatur, &c. (Petrus Canisius, *De Maria Disp.* Lib. II. c. 13.)

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Trinity, and of human nature, makes a Man-God, Jesus Christ; but his sanctity does not attain so high a degree, as I will not say to exceed, but even equal the virtue and grace of that singular Virgin, who was, as Saint John Chrysostom says, the truly great miracle, superior in sanctity to the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, yea, to all the choirs of Angels.*

That in thus exalting Saint Joseph we may not be accused of any exaggeration, we will close by citing the words of the holy Bishop of Geneva. "Saint Joseph," says Saint Francis de Sales, "surpassed the angels and the archangels in purity. For, if by being exposed only a few days to the heat of the material sun, the lily acquires its dazzling whiteness, who can conceive the extraordinary degree of purity to which Saint Joseph was exalted, exposed as he was, day and night for so many years, to the rays of the Sun of Justice, and of the mystical moon, which derives its splendour from Him."

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* Magnum revera miraculum fuit Beata semper Virgo Maria. Quod namque illa majus, aut illustrius ullo unquam tempore inventum est, seu aliquando inveniri potuerit? Quidnam illa sanctius? Non Prophetæ, non Apostoli, non Martyres, non Patriarchæ, non Angeli, &c. (St. John Chrysostom.)

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CHAPTER VI.

SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF SAINT JOSEPH, WHICH OUR LADY REVEALED TO SAINT BRIDGET.

THE Gospel in one word gives us the whole history of Saint Joseph's life, and in three or four expressions the most exact account of his obedience. A notice of the other virtues in particular, we find in the Revelations of Saint Bridget. The Mother of God, who was an eye-witness of the actions of her most holy spouse, revealed them in these words: "Be assured that, before our espousals, the Holy Ghost declared to Joseph that I was immaculate in word, deed and thought, and had consecrated my virginity to God by vow. Hence he espoused solely with the view to serve me as his Sovereign. I knew also by the light of

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heaven that I was to be Joseph's spouse, as this was necessary for the fulfilment of the Almighty's design, but without detriment to my virginal integrity. After our espousals I conceived in my womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the Only Begotten of the Father: Joseph knew it, and without suspecting my fidelity, was deeply surprised. This marvel did not surprise him as new, because he was certain of what the prophets had foretold, that the Redeemer of the human race should be born of a Virgin; but deeming himself unworthy to be in the company of her who was already Mother of God, he thought to leave me. He did not carry out his design, because the Angel of the Lord appearing to him, while he slept, commanded him not to leave me. Joseph obeyed, and began once more to serve me as his Lady, and I too served him with such humility and subjection that I depended on his orders. Never did I hear a word of murmur or impatience from his lips. In his poverty he was most patient, and ready for toil when necessity required it. If any offended him, he was so far from vengeance, that he showed amid outrages an admirable meekness. He served me with a most profound respect, and was at the same time a great defender of my virginal purity, against those who gainsayed it. His conversation and his desires were ever directed to the goods of heaven; so that he appeared dead to the world and the flesh. His most frequent expressions were: God grant me life to fulfil his holy will. His discourse was of God, and showed the divinity which inspired it. He was seldom in the gatherings of men, because his thoughts were to converse with his Lord, and do whatever he knew was pleasing to him; and great therefore is now Joseph's glory."

The capital point of Saint Joseph's life, is the circumstance of his wishing to leave the Mother of God when he

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perceived her new situation. The Fathers and theologians, both ancient and modern, are divided in opinion as to this point; as I have shown: I will therefore simply add here the words of a revelation made to Saint Bridget, by which it appears that Saint Joseph, before the apparition of the angel, had private notice of the mystery. The revelation is as follows: * "Joseph, leave not the Virgin confided to thy care; it is true that she has conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, as thou hast heard from her lips. Serve her faithfully, and discharge the duty of guardian and witness of her purity." These expressions are conformable to the doctrine of Saint Jerome, the Father of the Scriptures and great Doctor of the Church, who affirms † that Saint Joseph, by the consent of his spouse, knew all that passed in that Virgin, of whose Son he was to be reputed the father.

Although perfectly convinced that in interpreting the holy Gospels and other Scriptures, we must not rely on private revelations, but on the general doctrine of the Church deduced from the opinions of the Holy Fathers, who are her doctors, and on unanimous tradition; nevertheless, I cite the revelations of Saint Bridget, because I find them acknowledged and approved in their sphere by three Sovereign Pontiffs, and conformable in their matter to a majority of the Holy Fathers, followed by Saint Bernard. Father Maldo-

* Cui angelus in somnis dixit: non recedas a Virgine commendata tibi, quia sicut audisti ab ea, sic verissimum est; concepit enim de Spiritu Sancto et pariet Salvatorem mundi. Ergo servi ei fideliter et esto pudicitiæ custos et testis. (St. Bridget, Revelations, Lib. VI. c. lix.) The revelations were examined by Cardinal Torquemada, and published by Gonsalvus Durant, in 1606, and have been approved by three Popes. These revelations are not then at variance with Scripture, for the Sovereign Pontiffs never would have approved what opposes the Gospel.

† *Antequam convenirent, inventa est in utero habens de Spiritu Sancto* Non ab alio inventa est, nisi a Joseph, qui pene licentia maritali futuræ uxoris omnia noverat. (Saint Jerome, *Comment. in Matth.* i. 1.)

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nado * says, that the opinion of Saint Bernard and the Fathers whom he cites is most conformable to piety, but least conformable to the text of the Gospel. All however differ from Maldonado, who think that the angel, when he appeared to Saint Joseph, came to give him a solid and authentic testimony of what he already privately understood. The notice which Saint Joseph had of the dignity of the Mother of God, did not so disturb him as to leave him troubled and fearful, or disposed to leave the Blessed Virgin whose pregnancy he saw; because the human breast is less impressed by what enters the ears than by what it receives through the eyes.

* MALDONADO, *in Matth.* i. 19.



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CHAPTER VII.

OF SAINT JOSEPH'S GLORY.

BY the word "magna," which signifies *great things*, did the most Blessed Virgin express the benefits which the Almighty vouchsafed to do her,* and by the same word she manifested to Saint Bridget the glory and felicity of her spouse. "Joseph's will," said Our Lady, "was God's will, and hence his glory is great." Gerson,† measuring the greatness of this felicity by the ministry of Saint Joseph, places it next to the glory of the

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* St. Bridget, *Revelations*, *Lib. VI. c.* lix.

† "Ille proximior videtur collocandus in cœlis, qui in ministerio fuit vicinior, obsequentior, atque fidelior post Mariam inventus in terris."—"Joseph should, it would seem, be placed nearer in heaven, as his ministry was closer on earth, and he was, next to Mary, the most obedient and faithful on earth." (Gerson, *Serm. de Nativ. Virg. Mariæ, consid.* 4.)

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Mother of God. Jerome de Guadalupe * exalts it above the bliss of the Angels and the Apostles, and thinks that Saint Joseph is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Blessed Virgin. Such a degree of glory was demanded by the dignity, prerogatives, and merits of the father of Jesus and most worthy spouse of Mary. Joseph was a just man according to the truth of the Gospel, and when in obedience to the Angel of the Lord, he remained in the society of the Mother of God, he passed, as Rupert says,† to the superlative degree of most just. His obedience was singular, that is to say, his victories were illustrious and unequalled, because in Scripture phrase the obedient are called triumphant and victorious.‡ His merits were eminent, and almost infinitely valuable, according to the pen of the distinguished Francis Suarez.§ His blessed soul was most generous to God, and next to those of Jesus and Mary, the most beloved by the Holy Trinity, so that we cannot wonder at Joseph's bliss being so superior among the blessed.‖

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* Dico magis vere quam audacter, super omnes choros Angelorum, nedum Apostolorum esse Sanctum Josephum collocatum ad dexteram Virginis. (HIERONYMUS GUADALUPENSIS, *in Luc.* i.)

† "Consummatio est hic sermo Angeli, quem in somnis accepit, ac statim Deo obedivit credulus, puellæ benevolus; eatenus vir justus, exinde justissimus."—"This is the burthen of the Angel's address, which Joseph heard in sleep, and immediately obeyed, credulous to God, charitable to Mary; till then just, thenceforward most just." (RUPERT, De Gloria et honore Filii hominis in Matt. i. 1.)

‡ An obedient man shall speak of victory. (Prov. xxi. 28.)

§ As the sin of those who crucified Christ was the greatest in its kind, on account of the dignity of the person; so the works of piety and beneficence in Saint Joseph were of an incalculable value, as he acted from a perfect knowledge and love of that person. (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. in* 3. *part. D. Thoma. disput.* 8. § 1.)

‖ "O quam dilecta Trinitati, Patri et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto domus illius Trinitatis,—Christus, Maria, Joseph."—"O how dear to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was the house of that Trinity, Jesus, Mary, Joseph."—(GERSON, *Serm. de Nativ. Virginis.*)

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Some writers * not only concede to the Holy Patriarch greater glory than to the other happy spirits, but even maintain that, while living in this world, he often beheld God with the same clearness as the blessed see him in heaven. This opinion is based on the privileges granted to other saints. Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas, speaking of this glory, or beatific vision, in a state that has not been permanent, believe that † Moses and Saint Paul enjoyed it. Famous theologians ‡ do not deny this happiness to the Blessed Virgin. Hence we cannot deprive Saint Joseph of it, as he was most like the Blessed Virgin in virtues and heavenly favors, knowing at times the power of the Divinity, as we learn from the Revelations of Saint Bridget.§ The Church compares Joseph before death to the blessed, and even believes him more happy than those glad spirits.

Thine arms embraced thy Maker newly born;
With Him to Egypt's desert didst thou flee;
Him in Jerusalem didst seek and find;
Oh day of joy to thee!

Not until after death their blissful crown
Others obtain; but unto thee was given,

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* GRACIAN, *Life of St. Joseph*, Lib. V. tit. iii. CELADA, *in Judith figurata*, num. 43.

† Augustinus determinat in libro (De videndo Deum) ad Paulinum, quod ipsa Dei substantia ab aliquibus videri potuit in hac vita positis, sicut a Moyse et Paulo."—"St. Augustine determines in his book to Paulinus (De videndo Deum) that the very substance of God can be seen by some in this life, as was the case with Moses and Saint Paul." (ST. THOMAS, 2. 2. q. 175. art. 3.)

‡ I say then in the first place, that it may be piously and probably believed that the Blessed Virgin was sometimes, in this life, raised to see the Divine Essence clearly for a short time. This is the opinion of most grave authors. (SUAREZ, *Tom. II. in* 3. *part. disp.* 19. §. 4.)

§ Josephus quandoque Deitatis potentiam cognovit. (ST. BRIDGET, Revelations, Lib. VI. c. lviii.)

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In thine own lifetime to enjoy thy God
As do the blest in heaven.*

Theophilus Raynaud † says, indeed, that this hymn in which the Church thus chants of Saint Joseph's wonderful bliss, is to be understood of the familiarity in which he lived with Christ, and not of that glory which consists in seeing the Divine essence clearly. I do not adopt the sentiment of Raynaud, because the Church, after enumerating the felicity which Saint Joseph enjoyed in the society of Jesus, adds that he also enjoyed, in this world, that glory which the blest possess after departing this life. And this undoubtedly is what theologians call the beatific vision. The base of Raynaud and other writers is, that the Holy Scriptures deny the clear sight of God to those in the way, that is, to the living; but this argument does not render improbable the opinion of Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas, and other theologians, who think that the texts which deny the clear vision of God to this life, do not refer to a transient and passing vision, but to that permanent glory which is reserved to the blessed in Paradise. Some also maintain that when God is seen in this world the soul is for a time separated from the body; but Tirinus,‡

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* Tu natum Dominum stringis, ad exteras
Ægypti profugum tu sequeris plagas;
Amissum Solymis quæris et invenis,
Miscens gaudia fletibus.

Post mortem reliquos mors pia consecrat,
Palmamque emeritos gloria suscipit
Tu vivens Superis par, frueris Deo
Mira sorte beatior.

Vesper Hymn, feast of St. Joseph.

† THEOPH. RAYNAUD, *Diptyc. Marian.* part II. punct. x. n. 6.

‡ "Probabiliter, tamen Sanctus Thomas et alii opinantur, animam Pauli non fuisse divulsam a corpore (scilicet cum *raptus in Paradisum* audivit arcana verba); nam alioquin non fuisset raptus vel extasis, sed occisio et mors."—"Saint Thomas and others, however, think, and with probability, that Paul's soul was not torn

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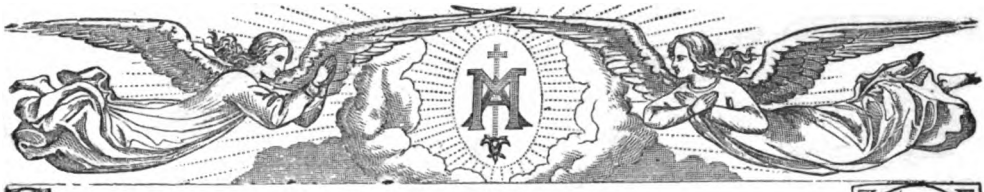
with Saint Thomas and other Doctors, asserts, that this separation is not necessary. Saint Joseph then may have seen the Divinity, for a short time without his blessed soul being separated from the body.

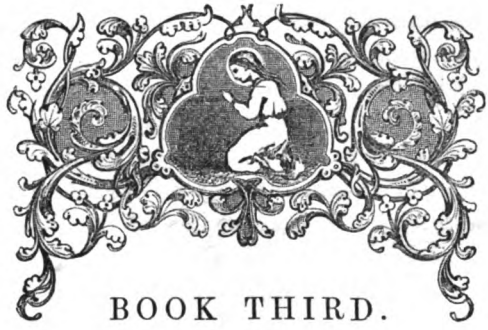
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from his body (when he was rapt to heaven and heard secret words); for otherwise it would not have been a rapture or ecstasy, but killing and death." (TIRINUS, in *II. Cor.* xii. 1–4.)



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BOOK THIRD.

DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH, AND HIS UNIVERSAL PATRONAGE.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE DEVOTION WITH WHICH THE CHURCH HONORS THE FATHER OF JESUS, AND THE MOST WORTHY SPOUSE OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

FOR a long time Saint Joseph had not that more solemn cultus, with which we behold him so generally honored in these later ages of Christianity. The reason why his greater veneration was buried in profound silence, was the fear justly entertained by the Church of the malice and boldness of a heresiarch who, abusing the sacred cultus with which the memory of the putative Father of Jesus was honored, wished thereby to confirm his error that Christ was by nature the



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son of Saint Joseph. Father Binet, indulging in the sentiments of his heart, bewails the misfortune entailed on Christendom by the malice of this bold heretic. I will give his words to show the felicity enjoyed by those, who glory in seeing the devotion to the most holy spouse of Mary extended over the whole world. "Let us confess in sooth that Saint Joseph has no equal among the blessed, and that by his dignity and ministry he is the honor of Paradise, and of the human race. I adore in awe the inscrutable providence of that God, who ordained this treasure of sanctity to lie in silence and almost unknown in past ages. Saint Joseph was scarcely thought of. His memory was scarcely celebrated. Few were they who remembered this great Saint. Oh! how unfortunate were those fourteen centuries in which this most radiant sun was as it were eclipsed. I bewail the misery of those ancient dwellers on this earth, who for so long a time had not the happiness of venerating thy merits and thy almost infinite dignity, and to implore, O great Joseph, thy patronage in their necessities and thy favor in their trials. God grant that the future may repair with usury the misfortune of the past." *

Saint Bernardine of Sienna,† wondering that the primitive ages of the Church did not promote the cultus of Saint Joseph, gives two reasons, which exculpate the piety and devotion of the ancients. The first is, that in those ages it was not customary with the Church to celebrate the Saints

* Binet, *Portrait des faveurs divins accordés a St. Joseph.*

† Licet fuerit tantæ dignitatis et gloriæ iste Sanctus, quod Pater Æternus ejus principatus similitudinem sibi liberalissime super incarnatum Filium condonaverit; tamen Sancta Ecclesia non multum solemnitatem ejus ordinavit; primo, quod ad limbum descendit, et ad vetus pertinet testamentum; secundo, propter vitandum scandalum hæreticorum, unde nec nominat eum Patrem, nisi cum determinatione, scilicet putativum. (St. Bernardine of Sienna, *Serm. de S. Josepho, art. II. cap.* 3.)

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of the Old Testament ; the second was, as already stated, fear lest heretics should appeal in proof of their mad doctrines to the solemn honors decreed to the most holy spouse of the Mother of God. For the same reason Saint Joseph was not anciently mentioned, nor called Father of Jesus, without adding the word *putative*, which the Gospel sometimes omits.* Isadore Isolanus adds four reasons to those of Saint Bernardine of Sienna why devotion to Saint Joseph was not diffused in the primitive ages of the Church.† First, because the dignity, miracles and favor of the Father of Jesus, were not sufficiently known till the Church, so violently afflicted for ages, at last breathed on the establishment of peace. The second reason was, that anciently the Church celebrated only martyrs, or those who had been founders or signal benefactors of some sanctuary, as we see by the famous Carthaginian Calendar published by the most learned Mabillon in his annals.‡ The third, because the primitive Church, besides those martyrs and signal benefactors of whom we have spoken, promoted the cultus only of those Saints whose relics or bodies the people possessed, and in whose memory small temples were already consecrated with a number of oratories,

* Behold thy father and I . . . And his father and mother were wondering . . . His parents went, &c. (Luke ii. 33, 41, 48.)

The custom which anciently obtained in the Church of not celebrating the saints of the Old Testament, cannot be the reason why no cultus or worship was paid to Saint Joseph, because he belongs properly to the New Testament, and not to the Old, or, as Suarez says, he belongs to both. (Tom. II. in 3. part. disp. 8. § 2.) Cardinal Prosper Lambertini, afterwards Pope Benedict XIV., approves this sentence in his work on the Canonization of Saints. "According to Suarez and Guiget, Saint Joseph does not properly belong to the Old Testament." (See *De Canonizatione*, or MANUEL DE AZEVEDO, *Synopsis*, Lib. IV. p. II.)

† ISOLANUS, *Summa de donis S. Joseph, cap.* 8. Cur a majoribus omissa fuerit celebritas S. Joseph ?

‡ MABILLON, (*ed. Parisiensis,*) p. 163.

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memorials or martyria, and even magnificent piles called basilicas, in imitation of the great and haughty palaces of the princes. Now, as there was on earth neither the whole nor any part of Saint Joseph's body, it was a necessary consequence that his memory could not be celebrated according to the ideas of that time. The relics called "sanctified," such as the staff, or some part of the chlamys or cloak of that great Saint, were very rare, and venerated only in particular churches on the day of the translation. Hence antiquity consecrated few shrines to this Saint, and did not pay him that most solemn cultus with which he is now honored throughout all Christendom. The last reason why this holy patriarch had no especial feast in those past ages was, that honorable mention was made of Saint Joseph on the festivals of Our Lord, his reputed son. This was the course pursued in ancient times by the Church with regard to the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God, to whom all the world owes a debt of gratitude for the solicitude and care with which he assisted Jesus, our Liberator. But in process of time the Church, deeming it no longer inexpedient, has more than atoned for the honors withheld in the primitive ages.

Sextus IV. instituted the universal feast of the holy patriarch, as a semi-double, on the 19th of March. Gregory XV. made it a holiday of obligation, it being then already a double in the breviary. Clement X., with the approval of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, made it a double of the second class in the year 1670. Clement XI. afterwards benignly sanctioned the addition to the office of proper hymns in vespers, matins and lauds, with new antiphons, versicles and lessons taken from the thirty-ninth and forty-first chapters of Genesis, which contain the wisdom and felicity of that Joseph in whom was typified the putative Father of Jesus. And finally Benedict XIII., yielding to the petitions of the Churches and

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princes of Europe, directed his name to be inserted in the Litany among the Patriarchs and Prophets.*

Patrignani extols devotion to Saint Joseph in this eloquent strain : " The Church has not been satisfied with erecting temples and altars to the Father of Jesus, with founding confraternities or congregations, with annually celebrating his memory, with drawing up a proper mass and office, with new hymns full of encomiums so sublime, that they alone seem to form the fairest idea of a sanctity superior to that of all the blest. Besides these demonstrations, the Church has made his festival a holyday of obligation, though in the midst of lent, and has raised up thousands of eloquent orators to preach throughout Christendom the greatness and glory of Joseph. Of what other saint do we hear in the sacred pulpits more universal, and at the same time more simultaneous and unison panegyrics ? Sermons are preached in honor of other saints on their festivals in some particular church in various cities ; but in almost all the churches of Christendom, and sometimes in a single city, thirty to forty sermons will be preached on the 19th of March in honor of the most glorious spouse of Mary. This being so, we may affirm that from the rising to the setting of the sun, where the names of Jesus and Mary are heard, resounds, too, the most sweet name of that Joseph who was chosen by God to be the guardian and protector of the Only Begotten of the Father, accomplishing in him that honorable promise of Scripture : 'He that is the keeper of his Lord shall be glorified.' † By these marks of veneration has the Church sought to compensate for the solemn honors not given in past ages, and at the same time to pay him a tribute of

* Benedict XIV. *De Beatif. et Canon. Sanct.* Azevedo, *Synopsis*, Lib. IV. part. 2. c. lv. Merati, *in Officio S. Josephi.*

† Proverbs xxvii. 18.



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gratitude for the signal favor which she confesses she has received from his hand. She bore in mind that Saint Joseph had co-operated in the unspeakable mystery of the Incarnation by the heroic actions of his life more than the ancient patriarchs by their tears and merits. She considered that Joseph was necessary, not so much that Jesus should be born without dishonor, as to give one to nurture him, with a father's love and a father's care, and support him by the labor of his hands up to the age of thirty.* The Church saw that Joseph, suffering the hardships and bitterness of exile among the Egyptians, preserved the life of Jesus till the time when he began the work of our redemption. Had not Joseph fled with the Infant Saviour, King Herod would have deprived him of life, and on the premature death of the Saviour our remedy would have perished, which, as Chrysologus remarks, was appointed for another time.† The Church, then, considering

* Ut enim non videretur Joseph amplius conjugio non esse necessarius .... Quod quamvis non sit necessarius conceptui, tamen utilis est procuratione; quia ipsa pariet Filium, et tunc Matri et Filio erit necessarius; Matri ut ab infamia defendat, Filio ut eum nutriat et circumcidat."—"For that Joseph should seem no longer necessary to the marriage ... Although not necessary directly, yet necessary indirectly; for Mary shall bear a Son, and then he will be necessary to both Mother and Son; to the Mother to defend her from infamy, to the Son to nurture and circumcise him. (Saint Thomas, *in Matt.* ii.)

† "O quam durum peregrinatio etiam inter cives, fratresque! Sapit, quid sit sua domus, qui sentit alienam ... Hinc est quod Christus fugit, ut cedat tempori, non Herodi. Non fugit propter authoris mortem, sed fugit propter sæculi vitam. ... Christus totam causam nostræ salutis occiderat, si se parvulum permisisset occidi. Christus venerat, ut quos præceptis docuerat, firmaret exemplis."—"O how hard is exile with citizens and brethren! Home is appreciated, when under a strange roof. Therefore did Christ flee, yielding to the time, not to Herod. He did not fly to escape the death of the Author, but he fled for the life of the world Christ had slain the whole cause of our salvation, if in childhood he had permitted himself to be slain. Christ came to confirm by example those whom he instructed by his precepts." (Saint Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 151, *de fuga Christi in Ægyptum.*)

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these benefits, by which the father of Jesus stands the illustrious benefactor of the human race, has wished the whole Catholic world to honor him with their devotion in sign of gratitude. Pharao, the monarch of Egypt, evincing his gratitude to the first Joseph, gave him the superintendence of his palace, and put the whole monarchy under his rule.* The Church seems to me to have acted similarly with Saint Joseph. Let us hear the expressions which she employs : ' O spouse of the Mother of God, I place under thy shadow my spiritual weal, and in thy hands all Christendom. Jesus, thy son, is my spouse : Mary, thy revered spouse, is my mother and queen : thou shalt be my protector and my father. I have no words to express honors equal to thy merits, thy dignity and thy ministry ; but in token of my will not ungrateful for thy benefits, I will call thee glory of the angels, and will endeavor to lead all by my example to extol thy felicity, thy dignity and thy virtues. I will say that thou art the anchor of hope that is sustaining the bark of the Church. I will applaud thee with the honor of conqueror of hell, faithful minister of our salvation, advocate of guilty sinners, refuge of the afflicted, and comforter of the dying. And to give thee in two words the praises which thy authority merits, I will call thee father of Jesus and spouse of Mary. Show, then, by thy powerful intercession that thou art the common father of the church, and faithful counsel of her children. United with thy spouse, defend them from that insolent persecutor who aspired to rear his trophies in hell over the ruin of souls. Most happy shall I be, when I have the glory of hearing that, from ocean to ocean, men chant the glorious name of Joseph. My desire is, O Father of Jesus and spouse of Mary, that

* And again Pharao said to Joseph : Behold I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt. (Gen. xli. 41)

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angels and Christians, united in one harmonious choir of music, may applaud thy dignity* and signal merits; that thou mayest be more glorious than that Joseph who dreamed that† he was worshipped by the sun, the moon and the stars.'" ‡

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* "Te, Joseph, celebrent agmina cœlitum,
Te cuncti resonent Christiadum chori."

Joseph, pure spouse of that immortal bride,
Who shines in every virgin glory bright,
Thy praise let all the earth re-echoing send
Back to the realms of light.

Vesper Hymn, feast of St. Joseph.

† I saw in a dream, as it were the sun, and the moon, and eleven stars worshipping me. (Gen. xxxvii. 9.)

‡ PATRIGNANI, Lib. I. ch. iv. The text, in which Joseph is spoken of as worshipped by the sun, moon, and eleven stars, is regarded by Tirinus, Rupert and others, as allegorical of Christ, adored by the Church triumphant and militant; but Patrignani thinks that it refers also to St. Joseph figured in that son of Jacob.



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CHAPTER II.

SAINT JOSEPH PUBLICLY HONORED IN SOME OF THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES, AND EVEN IN THE WEST, BEFORE GERSON, ISIDORE ISOLANUS, AND SAINT BERNARDINE OF SIENNA PROMOTED HIS DEVOTION.

TO begin by the East, I say that Saint Joseph was honored among the Copts or Egyptians, who, according to Isidore Isolanus,* celebrate the feast of the 20th of July, according to their calendars, which also give the history of the Saint as preserved among those Orientals. Although this is, in the main, a story based merely on vulgar traditions, it shows, nevertheless, that Saint Joseph was not forgotten among the

* Consuevere Orientes Catholici festa S. Joseph celebrare vigesima Julii ingenti veneratione: magnis enim honoribus Sanctum prosequunter Joseph. (ISOLANUS, *Summa de donis S. Joseph*, cap. ix.)



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Egyptians. Daniel Papebroke, a celebrated critic, and one of the continuers of the work of Bollandus, says that the feast and veneration of Saint Joseph among the Copts began in the primitive ages of Christianity, and even before Saint Athanasius sent preachers to the highlands of Abyssinia.* This occurred in the early part of the fourth century, when Saint Athanasius was prelate of the church of Alexandria. The Abate Trombelli,† following Papebroke, says: "Most ancient was the custom of the Abyssinians and Syrian Greeks, of celebrating the feast of Saint Joseph; and it is probable, as Papebroke teaches us (for he is a man who exactly and rigorously observes the laws of criticism), that these nations, from the traditional recollection of the Saint's stay in those countries, venerated him long before Saint Athanasius sent them missionaries to instruct them in the rites of the Church of Alexandria. Now, as this mission of Saint Athanasius took place in the outset of the fourth century, when that Saint presided over the Church of Alexandria, Papebroke deems it not improbable that the Copts venerated Saint Joseph prior to that time, remembering, as I believe, the tradition that the Saint lived among them when he was in Egypt. This admitted, it will be difficult to find the cultus of any Saint more ancient than that of St. Joseph.

* [See Harris, Highlands of Ethiopia.]

† Trombelli, part II. cap. ii. num. 1. Papebroke thus replies to the Carmelite Father Sebastian, who had attacked him. "Quid tandem ad veterem S. Josephi cultum tantopere facit . . . postquam demonstravi, ipsum multo citius fuisse receptum a Græcis etiam in Syria pro Dominica prænotata: a Copti vero, sive Ægyptiis [qualis fuit S. Antonius] Coptico, non Græco ritu sacra obeuntibus ad diem 26 menses Abibi, quod respondet 20 Julii nostri? Si tunc habuissem Habessinæ gentis Hagiologium metricum, quod Junium componens deinde accepi, addidissem fortassis, illum colendi S. Josephi ritum in Ægypto multo prius usurpatum videri quam prædicta Habissinorum natio esset per prædicatores a S. Athanasio submissos fidem edocta et factis ab Alexandrina Ecclesia instructa." (*Acta Bollandiana vindicata* 454. *art.* 10. § 5.)

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"Not only among the Egyptians, but also in Persia, was the foster-father of Jesus known and venerated. The reason for this belief is, that one of the Christians put to death by Sapor the Proud, who reigned contemporaneous with Constantine the Great, bore the name of Joseph.* It is consequently a most probable conjecture, that he assumed the name from the great love which he bore the Saint; since, as Eusebius says,† the primitive faithful adopted the names of the saints whom they loved more especially. As to the cultus which the Christians of Syria rendered Saint Joseph, there is nothing to fix its antiquity; but, if we may credit Florentinus,‡ it is beyond all doubt, that Saint Joseph was anciently venerated in Syria, and he is still venerated there, because his memory is celebrated.

In the Greek Church the cultus of Saint Joseph is confessedly very ancient, for we have monuments of it from the time of Constantine the Great. St. Helena, mother of that emperor, erected a church at Bethlehem, in honor of the Spouse of the Virgin Mary, as Nicephorus Callistus informs us,§ when enumerating the basilicas and oratories erected in the East by that heroic woman. In the menology drawn up by the orders of the Emperor Basil, the feast of Saint Joseph is not expressly mentioned, but it is very credible that the Greek who composed that menology omitted the

* The Greek Menology, the Ruthenian Tables, and the Roman Martyrology, all contain their names. In the Menology it reads: "The contest of the holy martyrs . . . Joseph a priest, and Aithala a deacon . . . these saints also underwent martyrdom in Persia." The Menology of Basil mentions another Saint Joseph, also a martyr in Persia, and commemorated on the 20th of November.

† Eusebius, Lib. VII. ch. 25.

‡ In the Calendar of the Syrians, the seventh Sunday before Christmas, which fell in the month of December, was the feast of the revelation to Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin. (Florentinus, *Notes on the Martyrology*, March 20.)

§ Nicephorus. Lib. VIII. ch. 30.

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festival of the holy Patriarch, because he had already spoken honorably of Saint Joseph in the commemoration made of the flight of the Infant Saviour to Egypt and of his return to the land of Israel. In other menologies, Saint Joseph is not thus passed over in silence. In the menology published by Cardinal Sirlet, we find these words on the 26th of December: "The celebrity of Our Holy Lady, Mother of God, the Ever Virgin Mary, and of the holy and just Joseph, her spouse." Monsignor Assemani also adverts,* that in the menology of Basil and other Greek menologies, Saint Joseph is also mentioned on the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth of December, and on the Sundays before and after the Nativity of Our Lord. In the metrical martyrology drawn up by the Greeks from the verses engraved on the sepulchres of the Saints, we find the verses addressed to the veneration and solemnity of the most holy Spouse of the Virgin Mary and Guardian of the Man-God; these are a solid testimony of his ancient commemoration in the Greek churches:

I extol Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin,
Alone chosen to act as Guardian.†

Besides the authorities cited, we have another convincing proof of the cultus of Saint Joseph in the Greek churches. This argument is found in the hymns of that Joseph who flourished in the time of Saint Ignatius, Patriarch of Constantinople, and whose canticles won him the epithet of Hymnographer. They were first published at Rome in 1661, by the celebrated Hyppolite Maraci, a Regular Clerk of the

* Assemani, *Kalendaria Ecclesiæ universæ*, Tom. V. 500–2.

† See the Metrical Calendar published in 1727 at Leipsic, by Urban Godfred Siber.

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Mother of God. Now this writer assures us that Saint Joseph was commemorated on the Sunday immediately after the Nativity of Our Lord, and for that Sunday he gives a canon which concludes with this pious supplication addressed to the most holy spouse of the Mother of God: "Thou, O God-bearing Joseph, wast the guardian of that Virgin, who preserved her virginity unsullied; of whom God the Word became incarnate, preserving her a virgin after her unspeakable delivery. Do thou, O Joseph, together with her, be mindful of us." *

In conclusion, we must observe, that the ancient custom of taking the name of Joseph, is shown by martyrologies and by the documents published by the Bollandists in the index of the first six months, and which is found in the seventh volume. This ancient custom was observed also in ages nearer our own, and we find not a few examples of this practice evincing the appreciation and esteem of our forefathers in the faith for Saint Joseph, the Spouse of Mary. It will suffice to note here, that the Patriarch of Constantinople and brother of the Emperor who subscribed at Florence the reconciliation of the Greek and Latin churches, was called Joseph.†

The veneration of Saint Joseph in former times was not confined to the Egyptians and Greeks; he had also public veneration in some Latin churches, according to Father John Chrysostom Trombelli,‡ whose authority I here follow. According to this writer the Franciscan martyrology alone enumerates no less than ten examples of men, eminent for piety,

* Custodisti, O Deifere Joseph, Virginem, quæ virginitatem incorruptam conservavit; ex qua Deus Verbum incarnatus est, conservans illam Virginem post partum ineffabilem. Tu, O Joseph, una cum illa memor esto nostri.

† Trombelli, *Life of St. Joseph, Part II. ch.* ii.

‡ Trombelli, *id.*

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who bore the name of Joseph in honor and veneration, as we must believe, of the spouse of the Blessed Virgin. Passing in silence over other arguments, he cites the authority of the Bollandists, who mention a Saint Joseph, a martyr in Africa, on the twentieth of March, and other authors who speak of various men of exalted sanctity, who bore the name of Joseph. These facts clearly suppose that the father of Jesus and spouse of the Virgin Mary, was not entirely unrecognized or unrevered in the Latin churches.

Cardinal Prosper Lambertini,* did not deny Saint Joseph all cultus, as he merely says that the holy Patriarch had little solemnity in the west, and that in consequence, Usuard and Ado do not give his name in their ancient martyrologies.

In the ancient and celebrated city of Bologna, it is certain that public and solemn veneration has been paid to Saint Joseph since the twelfth century, and that at that time there was a church erected and consecrated to his glorious name, as we are informed by Cardinal Lambertini,† afterwards Benedict XIV. This learned pontiff does not state the time of the erection of the church, but it is usually believed to date long prior to the twelfth century.

This church gives name to the ward or street of Saint Joseph in Bologna, and it was a parish church served first by secular clergy and then by Servite Fathers, till the pontificate of Saint Pius V., when it was given to the Magdalen nuns, whose convent had stood without the Saragossa gate, but was then transferred within the city. The Servites took the old Magdalen convent and church, which is now the parish church of Saint Joseph, for the names were also transferred, the old church of St. Joseph taking the name of Magdalen.

* Benedict XIV. De Beatif. et Canoniz. Sanct. Lib. IV. pt. 2.
† Id. Appendix II. Lib. IV. part 2.

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Before it passed to the hands of the nuns, the feast of Saint Joseph was always celebrated there with great solemnity on the nineteenth of March; and as Trombelli says, with so much pomp, that in the time of the Bentivoglios and perhaps before, there were horse-races in the afternoon, which was the custom at Bologna only on the great festivals, when there was a great concourse of people.

It is also regarded as certain, that Saint Bernardine of Siena preached in Bologna, on the occasion of this festival, the panegyric which he delivered in honor of Saint Joseph; because the panegyric of a saint is preached only on his solemnity; and on the other hand, we know that in the time of Saint Bernardine, the memory of the most holy patriarch was celebrated in other parts of Italy. We do not deny withal that Saint Bernardine said in one of the churches of Padua, that Saint Joseph was, body and soul, in Heaven; because this the Saint might say at any time in order to excite the Paduans to devotion towards the spouse of the Virgin Mary and acknowledged Father of Jesus.

Others, and they are not few, think that not only this sermon of St. Bernardine's, but also that the pomp and honors which John Baptist Mantuanus describes, applied to the feast of Saint Joseph as solemnized at Bologna, where the poet resided for some years.

Post decimam lux nona tua est, tua templa Sacerdos
Velat; et ad numerum tibi tinnula verberat æra;
Verrit humum; legit areolis nova gramina tonsis;
Et postes vernare facit, frondere columnas;
Albentes splendere aras, redolere sacellum.*

Thus did he seek to consecrate some efforts of his muse to

* Joannes Baptista Mantuanus. *De sacris diebus.*

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the most worthy spouse of the Virgin Mary, and reputed Father of the Man God.

This opinion is not devoid of probability, as well from the second line, which alludes to the custom, peculiar to the Bolognese, of ringing their bells in regular musical time,* as on account of the Church of Saint Joseph, which must be that of Bologna; as neither in Lombardy nor in the Romagna, nor in any other of the places where Mantuanus was, is there any trace of a church then consecrated to Saint Joseph. The word *templa*, used by the poet, though plural, need not imply many churches, as it is a license frequently used by poets, to use the plural for the singular when the metre requires it.

These facts throw sufficient light on the antiquity of the devotion to Saint Joseph at Bologna; but as they are proofs not mentioned by Papebroke and other foreign critics, we must have recourse to others to which this exception cannot be taken. As such we regard the famous constitution of the church of Bologna, established by Monsignore Bernard, who was elected Bishop of Bologna in the year 1372, and which were published by Mgr. Zaneti, vicar and suffragan or auxiliar of Cardinal Lorenzo Campegio, Bishop of that city. It is evident too, that Saint Joseph was invoked publicly in the litany at Bologna, as Benedict XIV. notes,† and the same pontiff shows, that Saint Joseph's name was inscribed in the Roman martyrology before the eighth century.‡ All this is an evident proof that devotion to this great Saint was not unknown among the Latins in the first ages of the Church. We do not by this pretend to affirm that Saint Joseph was

* Trombelli, *Life of St. Joseph, Part II. ch.* ii. *n.* 14.

† Benedict XIV. *De Canoniz. Sanctorum, App. II. to Part II. Lib. V.*

‡ Id. Lib. IV. part 2.

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anciently venerated only in the city of Bologna, for we know that the illustrious Peter Natali, in the fourteenth century, wrote a life of the most holy spouse of the Virgin Mary, in which he cites a still more ancient biography written by Fray Bartholomew of Trent, a Dominican, and first author of a "Sanctoral," a book such as was later styled a "Flos Sanctorum." This writer states, that he found the feast of Saint Joseph named, and regularly placed in a very ancient calendar taken from Eusebius of Cesarea, or according to others, Jerome of Eusebius, that is, disciple of Eusebius, meaning Saint Jerome, the Father of the Church.*

Independent even of those monuments, we can demonstrate the antiquity of devotion to Saint Joseph, by the testimony of John Gerson, who, writing two letters of exhortation as to the veneration and solemnity of the spouse of the Virgin Mary, in the first, directed to "a certain person to have the feast of Saint Joseph, spouse of the Mother of God, celebrated," he says, that in parts beyond the sea (by which he apparently means England), the death of Saint Joseph was celebrated with solemnity on the octave of the Purification of Our Lady, if not hindered by Septuagesima.† In the second letter, he exhorts the Duke of Berry to take Saint Joseph for his advocate and most powerful intercessor with the Mother of God and her son Jesus Christ, giving the example of many persons eminent for sanctity and wisdom, who entertained a singular veneration for the Saint.† In these

* In quodam tamen antiquissimo Kalendario, in cujus exordio rubrica ponebatur: quod ex vetustis Eusebii Cæsariensis exemplaribus sumptum fuerat, scriptum reperi festum Joseph Sponsi Dominæ nostræ xiv. Kalendas Aprilis. (BARTHOLOMEW OF TRENT, *Vita Sancti Josephi.*)

† GERSON, *Epistola ad N. ut celebretur festum Sancti Joseph, conjugis Sanctæ Dei Genitricis.*

‡ Sume igitur Domine, et concilia tibi, tandem hæc faciens, peculiarem tuum

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same letters, Gerson states that Saint Joseph had a proper office recited in the church of the Augustinians at Milan, and a feast in many parts of Germany. But all this cultus is but a shadow, if compared to the brilliant solemnity which Saint Joseph has had throughout Christendom since the days of Gerson, Isidore Isolanus, Saint Bernardine of Siena, Saint Teresa of Jesus, and Saint Francis of Sales.

Many are they, indeed, who have promoted devotion to Saint Joseph in the Latin church. According to the Bollandists, whom Tillemont cites approvingly, the Carmelites introduced the cultus of the holy Patriarch from the East into the West.* Gerson promoted it by his writings, and by the last efforts of his zeal before the Council of Constance; but if we must speak ingenuously, Saint Teresa yields to none in devotion to Saint Joseph; because this Saint, as Tillemont and Trombelli § say, by her example and exhortations caused the feast of Saint Joseph to be celebrated throughout the whole Catholic Church, with most especial devotion, and caused the faithful to invoke him unceasingly, and recur to him in all temptations and necessities, public and private.†

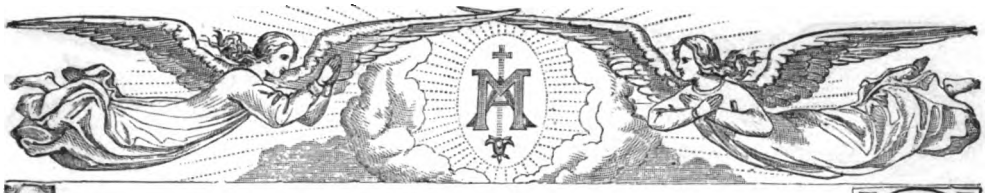
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protectorem, amicum bonum, intercessorem potentem, Sanctum Joseph erga Dominam nostram et filium suum Jesum, ut pervenias de mortali hac vita, et brevi peregrinatione ad perennis Gloriæ civitatem. Clemens VII. in veneratione singulari habebat Sanctum Joseph sicut etiam nostri temporis multi magnæ scientiæ et probitatis habent et habuerunt, quemadmodum Cardinalis Cameracensis, præceptor meus, &c. (GERSON, *Epistola ad Ducem Bituricensem.*)

* Bollandus believes that the Carmelites introduced this feast from the East, and that the Franciscans having received it in 1399, it spread to all the Latin Churches. (TILLEMONT, I. 79.)

† TROMBELLI, *Life of St. Joseph*, Part II. ch. ii. numb. 26. Some writers cited by Bollandus (*Acta Bollandiana Vindicata*, p. 343. *art.* 10. § 5.) affirm that the cultus of Saint Joseph in the Latin Churches is new. If these authors mean the most solemn and universal cultus, what they say is undoubtedly correct; but if they apply their assertion to all the churches, their opinion cannot be admitted, in consequence of the proofs advanced by us in this chapter.

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CHAPTER III.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE FAITHFUL HAVE MANIFESTED THEIR ESPECIAL VENERATION TO SAINT JOSEPH SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

BY three points especially may we know the devotion paid to any Saint: by the feast instituted in his honor, by the solemnity with which his memory is celebrated, and by the pious demonstrations whereby the faithful prepare to celebrate his festivity. There are three feasts of Saint Joseph, instituted in the Roman Church: the feast of his death or transit to the other life; the feast of his espousals with the Blessed Virgin, and the feast of his patronage. We shall devote this chapter to the consideration of these feasts.

On the 19th of March, the Roman Church celebrates the happy transit of Saint Joseph, that is, commemorates the day on which he passed to another life. As by this solem-





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nity the Church celebrates the memory of Saint Joseph, we may be asked whether he died on that day. Anthony Sandinus * says, that there is nothing certain as to the day of his death. The Egyptians, or Copts, maintain that he died on the twentieth of July; and they not only affirm this in the fabulous life which they have of the Saint, but also in their calendars, whose authority is on a par with the life. Some believe that the Copts fell into error, and confounded the spouse of the Blessed Virgin with Saint Joseph, the martyr, who is named on the 20th of July, in a breviary of the thirteenth century, preserved at Bologna in the library of St. Saviour's. On this point the Bollandists say that both Greeks and Latins, misled † by the identity of names, have attributed to one Saint what belongs to a very different one from the Saint named in their calendars. Following the Roman martyrology, with Ado, Usuard, and other ancient calendars, the Bollandists place under the twentieth of July, Saint Joseph, surnamed the Just, who was proposed with St. Matthias for the apostleship left vacant by Judas. From the proofs advanced by Papebroke, Trombelli ‡ says that it is

* Jam ejus vitæ supremus dies non minus incertus est, atque ignotus, quam ætas ejus. (SANDINUS, *de Sancto Josepho*, § 11.)

† Fortassis uti diem, sic et personam confuderunt Orientales illi et quicumque nunc eos in Italia sequuntur: omnes enim Latini Martyrologii post Adonem et Usuardum 20 Julii festum Joseph Justi recolunt ejus, qui cum Matthia fuit ad Apostolatum præpositus in locum Judæ; (*Josephum*) in Judæa glorioso fine consummatum, ait Romanum Martyrologium. Joseph autem Divæ Virginis sponsum concorditer habent ad diem 19 Martii; quo mortuum esse Sanctum Joseph uti non possumus affirmare pro certo ita vero simillime negare possumus, ipsum ea die B. Virgini fuisse conjunctum; licet desponsationem ejus habeant gemina Usuardi exemplaria . . . Credibilius est enim, quod apud Nicephorum Evodius affirmat, quarto post desponsationem mense Incarnationem Verbi esse factam, atque adeo illam ad mensem Decembrem pertinere vel saltem ad Januarium (PAPEBROKE, ACTA SANCTORUM, *Comment. Histor. S. Josephi*, ad diem. 19. Martii § 2. n. 12.)

‡ TROMBELLI, part II. ch. iv. num. 2.

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highly probable, if not certain and evident, that the death, not of Saint Joseph, the spouse of Mary, but of Saint Joseph the Just, must be placed on the twentieth of July. And if any feast of the holy Patriarch was celebrated on that day, we say that it must have been in commemoration of his arrival in Egypt, or of his departure thence for the land of Israel. Those ignorant people, uninformed of this, supposed that their ancestors celebrated on that day the memory of the death of the most holy spouse of the Mother of God, and by their ignorance led into error many others who adopted their calendar.* The Church of Milan celebrates the feast of Saint Joseph on the twelfth of December, with a proper preface at Mass. They do this, because, according to the Ambrosian rite, they cannot celebrate it in Lent, and leave it till that period in Advent when mention is made of the spouse of the glorious Virgin Mary.† The more ancient martyrologies, and almost all the Latin churches, commemorate the death of the holy Patriarch on the nineteenth of March. The practice of the Greek Church throws no light on the question, because there is no mention in their breviaries and other ecclesiastical books, of the death of the most holy spouse of the Mother of God. However, I consider it settled by this argument of Trombelli. "Papebroke, frequently cited by me, and justly held in high regard by the learned, conjectures that Saint Joseph died at Jerusalem,

* All the Latin Churches celebrate it on the 19th of March, except a few in Italy, which do so on the 20th of July, confounding, as the Bollandists believe, Saint Joseph the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, and Joseph the Just. (TILLEMONT I. 79.

† Mediolanensis ecclesia ad diem 12 Decembris (nec enim Quadragesimæ tempore ulla Sanctorum festa celebrat) secundum Liturgiæ Ambrosianæ ritum proprium canit S. Josepho præfationem in hunc modum: *Vere dignum et justum est . . . cujus* (Verbi Divini) *Sacræ Incarnationis Beatus Joseph Alumnus et alter esse meruit*, &c. (PAPEBROKE, *ubi supra*, § 3. n. 18.)

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where he had gone to venerate the Lord on the solemn day of the pasch. The conjecture is plausible, and from its tending to fix the death of Saint Joseph on the nineteenth of March, it is, I see, generally admitted. It may be confirmed by the very ancient custom of the Church of Bologna, which, if I am not mistaken, is the first city which publicly venerated Saint Joseph, by celebrating the memory of his death on the nineteenth of March. Peter de Natali puts it on the same day, citing Saint Jerome, or as others judge, Eusebius of Cæsarea, who was reputed in the fourteenth century the first author of the martyrology. The greater part of the churches of Italy follow the custom of Bologna. It is evident too, that the Roman Church celebrates Saint Joseph's death on the nineteenth of March, and is followed in this by almost all the Latin churches, which at Lauds on the feast of the illustrious saint chant the hymn :

Iste, quem læti colimus fideles,
Cujus excelsos canimus triumphos,
Hac die Joseph, meruit perennis
Gaudia vitæ.

Worshipped throughout the Church to earth s far ends
With prayer and solemn rite,
Joseph this day triumphantly ascends
Into the realms of light ;

which expressly conveys the idea that he died on the day on which his memory is celebrated.

This is the most ancient feast celebrated solemnly by the Roman Church in honor of Saint Joseph. Before the reform of the Breviary, which was made during the pontificate of Saint Pius V., it was celebrated most solemnly with hymns, antiphons, and proper lessons, which had been in use since Gerson's day, these were then retrenched in consequence of the reform,

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as Merati says. Isidore Isolanus, in the early part of the sixteenth century, composed and published an office and mass, entirely proper to the Saint, adding parts from his work, "*Summa de donis Sancti Josephi;*" but no church that we are aware of, ever adopted this office and mass. After the correction of the breviary an office was drawn up, which the pious Patrignani mentions in his "*Il Divoto di San Guiseppe.*" I quote his words. "To the barefooted Carmelites also we owe the office of Saint Joseph, with new hymns, so devout and sententious as to comprise a summary of all the most singular prerogatives of this Saint. There lived, at Rome, Sister Clare Mary of the Passion, a virgin most worthy of eternal remembrance, from her renouncing the luxury and pomp of the Colonna palace, which she left, to embrace the poverty and contempt of the Crueified One, entering the strict cloister of Saint Teresa. Imitating the institute and virtues of her seraphic mother, she endeavored, as far as lay in her power, to glorify that Joseph, whose glory she had so zealously promoted. She accordingly began to use all her influence with the Cardinals, to have the office of Saint Joseph celebrated throughout the whole Church as a double of the second class, as it was by special privilege celebrated by the order of barefooted Carmelites, and that proper hymns and antiphons should be inserted. With this view she presented a memorial to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and after overcoming various difficulties, it returned to her hands with a favorable decree, as appears by her life." *

The second feast of Saint Joseph is his sacred espousals. This festival, it would seem, took its rise in Flanders and in France, after Gerson † published the office which he com-

* TROMBELLI, *Life of St. Joseph*, Part II. ch. iv. Life of Sister Clare Mary of the Passion. Book IV. ch. viii.

† GERSON, *Epistola ad Doct. Parvi.* PAPEBROKE *Comment. ubi supra*, § 2. *num.* 12.

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posed in compliance with the last will of the pious Canon Chicquot, who directed by his will, committing the affair to Gerson, that the Church of Chartres, instead of the anniversary, which, according to its foundation, it was to make of him, it should celebrate the memory of Saint Joseph. After Gerson's time, permission was given to the Franciscan Order to celebrate the espousals on the seventh of March, as Papebroke shows; but it was done by reciting the office of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, substituting *espousals* for *nativity*, till a new office was drawn up corresponding to the new solemnity. This favor, accorded to the Franciscans by Pope Paul III., was extended to other churches and religious orders, which did not celebrate the espousals on the same day. Some kept this feast in the month of March, others in the month of December or January, and these meet the approbation of Papebroke. The Roman Breviary finally assigned this solemnity of the espousals of Saint Joseph with the Blessed Virgin to the twenty-third of January, on which Benedict XIII. conceded the proper office and mass to the States of the Church and some kingdoms that solicited it. In the Spanish kingdoms this feast is celebrated in November.

The third solemnity of the holy patriarch is the feast of his patronage, concerning the institution of which Tromballi says: "When the Church openly recognized that the merits and dignity of Saint Joseph had raised him to an eminent degree of glory, she not only frequently invoked him in her afflictions, but to show the efficacy of his intercession, permitted his patronage to be celebrated (for it is certainly powerful), to show us that the Almighty is more liberal in granting mercies sought by his Saints, when they are of greater merit and more exalted dignity. The republic of Venice was the first State that obtained permission to celebrate the festival of this patronage on the third Sunday after

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Easter. The favor was afterwards extended to many religious Orders and States which solicited it." *

In Mexico it is celebrated on that day; and in the city of Guatimala before its destruction, the feast was a most solemn one, with high mass, panegyric, fireworks and music at the Church of Saint Joseph. This powerful patronage was celebrated with equal solemnity in the town of Petapa, before its inundation, and is now celebrated in the new city of Barillas to which the inhabitants removed. In the following chapter we shall speak of other festivals of Saint Joseph, celebrated through the particular devotion of some pious souls, who may be styled most happy, in consequence of the greatness of the protector, that Saint so intimately connected with Jesus and his most holy Mother, to whom they consecrate their hearts, and in whose hands they place their memorials.

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* Trombelli, Part II. ch. vi





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CHAPTER IV.

DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH IN THE EMPIRE OF MEXICO, AND ALL PARTS OF NORTH AMERICA WHICH BELONG TO THE DOMINIONS OF THE SPANISH KING.

THE Almighty has enriched the flourishing empire of Mexico with an abundance of the fruit of the earth and with mines of silver and gold which are world-renowned; but these are not the most estimable treasures of those fair realms, which our American poets call

Retazo que sobró del firmamento,

mingling this truth of nature with the usual fictions of poesy. Other riches shine in that empire, having entered almost with the first lights of faith which the ancient valor of Spain bore thither, amid the envy of many nations. The conquest of that new world began with rare felicity, and that same God,



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who had for centuries been unknown, began to fill it with blessings, giving it as a testimony and first pledge of his cordial love the miraculous picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that powerfully attractive magnet for the hearts of Mexicans, who regard that wonderful prodigy, wrought of roses, as the chain of their greatest felicity. I will not attempt a description of this wonder, for fear of repeating feebly what has been so eloquently written by the learned and pious Don Andres Diego de la Fuente, a native of San Louis Potosi, but transferred in the last years of his life from Mexico to the States of the Church, where, imitating the ancient poets of Italy, he sang in graceful verse that prodigious painting, in which Omnipotence seems to have shown its power, to distinguish that nation by a signal and renowned benefit. No wonder that Fuentes scatters exotics in his poem, when Heaven used roses to form the likeness of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In his description he gives us a slight sketch of the continual favors and graces, which the Mother of God, portrayed in that sacred painting, deigns to lavish on her beloved Mexican children.* This wonder, whereby God sought to exalt our Mexico, was followed by another signal favor; because that Lord who is rich in mercy, did not stop at this first grace, but proceeded to a second, giving it the singular protection of the spouse of the Mother of God, with which, from the time of its discovery, our America has been favored.

This special protection and known patronage of Saint Jo-

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* Quanta per assiduas animorum aggesta piorum
Divitias, et sponte datas, et jure repensas,
Semper ut optatum Diæ clementia Matris
Larga bonum præstat, protestanturque tabellæ,
Quæ multæ in templo pendent. Sed dicere tantam
Congeriem rerum quis possit carmine?

De la Fuente, *Description of the picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Faenza* 1773, *part III. v.* 330.

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seph over the Mexican empire, is not based on the sand of that affection, which commonly draws the high-minded towards the glory of their nation. What I have said, I can confirm by the decision of a council, celebrated in the New World, and afterwards approved by the oracle and supreme head of Christendom, as the reader may see in the collection of Labbé, or in Cardinal Aguirre's collection of councils of Spain and the New World.* The words of the third Council of Mexico, whose acts have been recently published with those of the two former, are as follows: "Moreover, whereas the devotion of this province to Blessed Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mary, has been singular, and it may piously be believed that, on account of the merits and intercession of that saint, New Spain has been endowed with singular blessings of the Almighty, the Provincial Synod of 1555, chose Saint Joseph as the general patron of this archiepiscopate and province, and ordered his feast to be observed. The present synod, renewing and confirming the same, has ordained, that his feast be celebrated in this province with an octave. If the octave, however, should fall in Holy Week, a commemoration is to be made till Wednesday." † The decision of this holy council is an authentic testimony of the special patronage and devotion of Saint Joseph in the vast Mexican empire, but is not the

* LABBE, *Concilia*, xxi. 1015. AGUIRRE, *Collect. Concilior. Hispaniæ et Novi Orbis*, Tom. IV.

† Porro, quia singularis fuit in Beatum Joseph Virginis Mariæ Sponsum hujus Provinciæ devotio, ob cujus Sancti merita et intercessionem, pie credi potest, Novam Hispaniam singularibus Dei beneficiis donari, provincialis synodus, Anno Domini 1555 celebrata, Sanctum Joseph in generalem hujus Archiepiscopatus et Provinciæ Patronum elegit, ejusque festum coli mandavit. Hæc quoque synodus, idem renovans et confirmans, statuit, ut festum ejusmodi in hac provincia cum octava celebretur. Si vero octava in Hebdomadam Majorem inciderit, de ea usque ad feriam quartam commemoratio fiat. *Concilium Mexicanum, cui præfuit Archiepiscopus D. D. Petrus Moya de Contreras, confirmatum Romæ die 27 Octobris, anni* 1589.

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only one. Another proof is the anonymous work, entitled, "Devotion to Saint Joseph in New Spain," generally ascribed to Father Anthony Paredes, of the diocese of Puebla. This author says: "On the conquest of this New World, the first fathers planted devotion to Saint Joseph with the true faith. The first provincial council celebrated in the metropolis, chose the Saint as patron of that rising church, and the third council, confirming the choice, provided for his veneration as universal patron, and his due commemoration, as has hitherto been observed. Our holy faith has daily spread in this kingdom, and with it an especial love to the holy patriarch; and now by an apostolic indult, whereby the Vicar of Christ approves the patronage, a day is set apart for celebrating his patronage with a proper mass and office. Besides this, in almost all churches seven masses are chanted, with great solemnity and great concourse of the faithful, on the seven days preceding the feast of Saint Teresa, his singular and most favored client. In some parts seven other masses are said at another season of the year, in honor of his seven dolors and joys, with all the usual pomp and public display. Many magnificent temples have been dedicated to his name in North America, with many a rich altar where his devotion is kept up with zeal, nor is there a city, town, or village, that does not claim his patronage. In these late days, devotion, which, when solid, is never idle, has consecrated to him the nineteenth day of each month, in memory of the nineteenth day of March, on which the Church celebrates his memory, and on that day both private and solemn masses are said with great concourse of the faithful, who hear them and receive Holy Communion." To this little account, given by a native Mexican, I think it not improper to add the testimony of a stranger, who, travelling around the world, stopped for a time in Mexico at the house of a pious priest, Don Alphon-

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so Gomez de Robles. This Italian traveller, Gemelli, says: "In all the churches in the city on Tuesday, the eighth of October, began the seven high masses in honor of Saint Joseph. This devotion originated in the year 1688, in the convent of the nuns of Saint Lawrence, and was afterwards followed by all. They terminate on the fifteenth, the feast of Saint Teresa, because this Saint is said to have been the author of the devotion. Dr. Robles introduced not long since another devotion, that of celebrating on the nineteenth of each month a high mass in honor of Saint Joseph, for having delivered the city of Mexico from a great earthquake which occurred on the nineteenth day of March, 1681." *

This devotion to Saint Joseph is not confined to the churches, it flourishes in almost all families, which, in their domestic devotions are wont to invoke the most holy patriarch as a signal protector. The custom of honoring the nineteenth day of each month, began in the imperial city of Mexico, but afterwards spread so, that in many churches, one would suppose it a general jubilee, from the number who approach the sacraments. The novena of the Saint is made on the nine days preceding his proper feast, both in churches and in private houses, after the rosary, which the family usually recite each evening, kneeling. The same veneration shown in the cities, is testified also in the smaller places and even in the country parts. I use general expressions, because all our Mexican America shows equal veneration and devotion to Saint Joseph. Nevertheless, to give some idea of the love which the inhabitants of North America profess to the holy patriarch, I will insert the account given me by Don Manuel Flores, a priest and eye-witness of the solemn devotion to Saint Joseph.

* GEMELLI, *Voyage around the world*, VI. 130.



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"In the city of Aguascalientes," says this worthy writer, "there is a singular love and devotion for Saint Joseph. On the nineteenth of each month, there are so many confessions and communions in honor of this great Saint, that if they do not exceed, they at least equal, what we commonly see in Italy on the most solemn feasts of the Blessed Virgin. On the same day, the principal streets of the city are lighted up with torches and lanterns, and a beautiful statue of the Saint is borne out in procession, during the recitation of the rosary, with music of a high order at the end of each mystery, corresponding in its harmony to the intensity of the devotion. The music is closed by fireworks that dispel the shades of night, and by their light and explosion, typify the brilliancy and power of joy and devotion that inspire all hearts.

On the nineteenth of March, there is a high mass at the parish church, with music that shows by its melody that art and its instruments have reached unwearied that distant land. There are in that city two communities of religious, in which every day of the novena before the feast, the prayers of the devotion are recited after high mass. The concourse of the faithful is excessive, as devotion is general and population large. At Cienega de Mata, outside of the city, the festival of the Saint is celebrated with even greater affection and display, as they bring out all the gold and silver consecrated to the holy patriarch, and this is so much that it might enrich many churches. I have witnessed the solemnity, and can aver that it is truly magnificent. The fireworks, which in Spanish America are considered an essential part of the celebration of the festival of a Saint, cost on that solemnity more than eight hundred dollars. Another proof of devotion is the number of statues of devotion to be found in that rich section, all wrought in the highest style of art. So highly does the proprietor, Dr. Francis Xavier

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Rencon Gallardo, prize these, that in showing his house (or as we would say in Italy, his palace) at Aguascalientes, he sets before the eyes of his guests, most beautiful statues and paintings of the most holy spouse of the Mother of God."

The town of Aguascalientes belongs to the diocese of Guadalajara in New Galicia, and from its abundance and amenity, a site equal, if not superior, to the loveliest gardens of Italy. By these demonstrations of devotion we may see the love and devotion to Saint Joseph throughout all Mexican America.

The Bollandists say,* that the glory of the spouse of the Mother of God is great, not only in heaven, but also on earth, since Europe has erected to him so many churches, chapels and altars, that it would be difficult to enumerate them. They might have said the same of our America, but on account of the distance, those critics were doubtless unaware of the peculiar and increasing devotion of the Mexican empire, and all the provinces of the New World, to that great Saint. Unfortunately, America has the misfortune of being known only and being belied by strangers for the gold and silver concealed in the bowels of its earth. Thus far, I have followed relations which I have had : I will now relate faithfully what I know otherwise, the devotion, love and veneration for Saint Joseph in the kingdom, and especially in the city of Guatimala, whose beauty, amenity and splendor, the envy of other cities, were buried in most lamentable ruins caused in two minutes by the fearful earthquake of July 29th, 1773. In its day of happiness, which it derived from

* Gloria sua nunc magna est; magna quoque non solum in cœlis, sed etiam in terris postquam tot ei templa per omnem Europam erecta sunt, oratoria et altaria, ut eorum innuere numerum, difficile est. ACTA SANCTORUM (PAPEBROKE), *ad diem* 20 *Martii*, § 8, p. 18.

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its lovely climate, and the perennial plenty that reigned around, Saint Joseph had his altar in every church, and a temple lately commenced. It was not very large, but in its miniature proportions were combined all the good taste and elegance of architecture; and we may say without exaggeration, that this most beautiful church of Saint Joseph was a compendium of the piety of Don Pedro Loaisa, and the people in the vicinity of the pious and magnanimous city of Guatimala, which had generously erected the basilicas or magnificent churches ruined by the memorable earthquake, as though the volcanoes were indignant or jealous to see such magnificent piles tower beside them. The statues of the holy Patriarch made and venerated there were innumerable, and of the highest style of art, the work of men acknowledged as masters in sculpture and carving, some being of wood, others of Guamanga stone, a most beautiful species of marble imported from Peru.

These were the veneration of the houses which they adorned, and still more of the churches, where, on the nineteenth day of March, the feast of Saint Joseph was celebrated with such magnificence and solemnity, that no less than eighteen panegyrics were preached in his honor.

In the other cities, towns and hamlets of the kingdom of Guatimala, the devotion to Saint Joseph was equally remarkable. In the ancient town of Petapa, twenty-one miles from the capital, the feast of Saint Joseph and the feast of his patronage was most solemnly celebrated with high mass, sermon, and the usual displays of fireworks. The city of Petapa was ruined by an inundation, but the solemnity of the holy patriarch was not buried in its ruins; for the beautiful statue venerated there, was transferred to the new town of Barillas. From the kingdom of Guatimala, devotion to the holy patriarch passed to the province of Nicaragua, where he is

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venerated with great solemnity, especially in Leon, where one devout client of Saint Joseph has collected so many statues of his holy patron, and books treating of him, as to form a perfect museum, more precious than the remains of antiquity so carefully preserved by others.

Were I to detail duly the devotion to Saint Joseph in the august city of Puebla, I might fill many chapters; but leaving the complete and exact relation to other pens, which, trained in that city, can describe it better, I shall merely say that the second church in that city is the magnificent church of Saint Joseph, with three naves and a magnificent chapel of Our Lord. The statue of Saint Joseph, venerated in this sanctuary, is borne every October to the Cathedral, where it remains a week during the high masses of Saint Teresa, celebrated there in his honor, as Patron against hurricanes, which had been most formidable; after which it is borne back by the chapter in solemn procession. The confessions and communions on the nineteenth of March, not only in Puebla, but also in all the other cities and large towns of our America, are beheld with admiration, and cannot be estimated.

In the city of Merida, the capital of the bishopric and government of Yucatan, devotion to Saint Joseph is placed as it were on a triumphal car. The Cathedral celebrates with the greatest magnificence and solemnity his feast, the nineteenth of March, the feast of his patronage, and especially that of his espousals, in thanksgiving for the victory gained on the 20th of November over the confederated Indians. In another church and college of the same capital, the seven masses of Saint Teresa were said in October, besides a mass on the nineteenth day of every month, accompanied by various spiritual exercises, established by the piety of the Meridans. Nor can we omit the triduum and eloquent panegyric, with which the city of Zamora in Michoacan consecrates

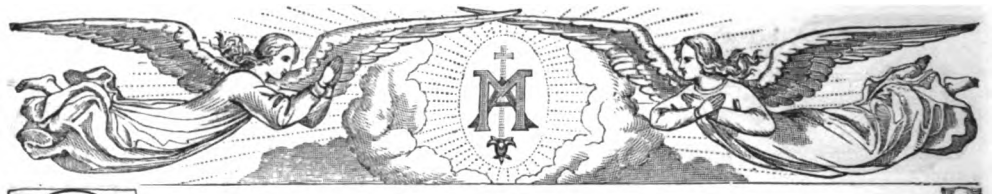
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itself to the most pure spouse of the glorious Virgin Mary and putative father of the Man-God.

I will crown this chapter by a most general proof of the love and veneration for the holy Patriarch throughout all our America, which is the custom of the people honoring their children in baptism or confirmation with the happy name of Joseph, adding it to the first name. This is so frequent, that when ignorant of a person's name, they always call one Joseph.



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CHAPTER V.

DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES.

AFTER so florid and detailed an account of the devotion to Saint Joseph which characterizes the southern or Spanish portion of our northern Continent, I cannot refrain from inserting here a sketch of that devotion, as it rose with the settlement of New France, and spread over the continent, from the mouth of the Saint Lawrence to the borders of Mexico.

Of this country, Saint Joseph was specially pointed out by heaven as the patron and protector, and as such he is still venerated in Canada. The venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, foundress of the Ursuline Convent of Quebec, and styled for the sublimity of her contemplation, and the activity of her zeal, no less than for her talents, the Teresa of



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New France, was, while in France, especially called in a vision to labor in Canada, and saw Saint Joseph as the patron of the country where she was to close her life and labors. This she soon learned to be Canada, to which country she embarked in 1639.* Her companion was Mother Mary of St. Bernard, who, burning with a desire of accompanying the colony which was to found a convent in the New World, had recourse to Saint Joseph, when her own timidity, the opposition of her superior and the refusal of her parents, prevented her. Contrary to every expectation her prayer was heard, and, assuming the name of Sister Mary of Saint Joseph, she adorned the western world with her sanctity and virtues, and died the object of public veneration.†

Prior to this the Jesuit Fathers, summoned to the Canadian mission, had regarded Saint Joseph as the patron of North America, and as such every where propagated his devotion, applying to him for the graces which they especially needed for themselves or for those confided to their ministry.‡ In 1633 they founded, under Father John de Brebeuf, their first mission among the Hurons, and dedicated it to Saint Joseph; nor did the name expire even with the ruin of the village Ihonatiria where it was situated: a new Saint Joseph's soon appeared, and continued for years,§ till in its fall it gave the first martyr of the mission in the person of Father Daniel.

Their first stationary Algonquin mission, too, that at Sillery near Quebec, also bore the name of Saint Joseph, and had the intentions of the holy founder been carried out,

* Charlevoix, Vie de la ven. M Marie del' Incarnation, 175, 201.

† Id. 230–4.

‡ Shea, History of the Ca'holic Missions, 176. Relation Huronne, 1637.

§ Id. 173–178. Relation de ce qui s' est passé 1636. Id. 1638. Garnier's Letters.

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the Abnaki mission of Saint Francis would also bear the name.*

Many of these early missionaries were spiritual children, or at least imbued with the spirit of Father Louis Lalemant, that singularly devout client of Saint Joseph, who never failed to obtain a favor solicited from his powerful patron.† Among these missionaries we may name Father Paul Ragueneau, long superior of the mission in Canada, and Father Peter Mary Joseph Chaumonot ; the founder of the confraternity of the Holy Family still existing in Canada. He accompanied Mother Mary of the Incarnation across the Atlantic in 1639, and experienced the protection of Saint Joseph ; for, as an iceberg was about to crush the ship that bore the missionaries with the Ursulines and Hospital Nuns, they made a vow to Saint Joseph, and miraculously escaped the death which seemed inevitable.‡ And at an earlier date he owed to Saint Joseph his admission into the Society of Jesus, when a perpetual headache seemed to offer an obstacle that caused his superiors to hesitate.§ The very next year Father Rene Menard with another holy colony were about to perish in a violent storm, but were rescued from a watery grave by the powerful protection of the Saint, who preserved them to labor in the land committed to his patronage.‖

Even before this the Recollect Fathers, the pious sons of the seraphic Saint Francis of Assisi, had initiated their Canadian missions by giving to the first child of the Algonquin race whom they baptized, the name of the holy spouse of Mary : ¶ the first Iroquois, whose baptism is recorded by the

* Bressani, Relation Abregée, 297–9. † Lalemant, Spiritual Doctrine, p. 16.
‡ Mother Juchereau, *Histoire de l' Hotel Dieu de Quebec*, p. 8.
§ Chaumonot, *Autobiography*.
‖ *Relation de la Nouvelle France*, 1639–40 Creuxius, *Historia Canadensis*.
¶ Le Clercq. *Etablissement de la Foi*, *I.* 130.

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Jesuit missionaries, received too the same blessed name,* and one of their first Huron converts was the saintly Joseph Chihatenhwa, whose life was so modelled on that of the holy Patriarch that the missionaries after his death invoked his intercession.† At Montreal, too, the first Indian, baptized and married *in facie ecclesiæ*, received the name of Joseph.‡ As the apostolic labors extended, the name of Saint Joseph was given to new missions, to islands, to rivers, to mountain and highland. St. Joseph Isle lay in Georgian Bay, St. Joseph's river entered Lake Michigan, and missions of Saint Joseph hallowed the land of the Cayugas and the plains of the Miamis ; and men of every tribe, in war and pestilence and famine, sought, nor in vain, the aid of Saint Joseph.

The devotion to Saint Joseph, which thus characterized the first Apostles to Canada, was perpetuated by their successors. The Sulpitians propagated a devotion so dear to the heart of Mr. Olier,§ and inspired the various communities at Montreal, as the Jesuits and Seminary Priests had inspired those at Three Rivers and Quebec, to turn in their necessities to Saint Joseph. Devotion to Saint Joseph and to the Holy Family was the great motive of the settlement of Montreal, where Father Chaumonot founded, as we have seen, a sodality to honor Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The Hospital at Montreal is directed by Hospital Nuns of Saint Joseph, an order founded at La Fleche in France by Mlle. Marie de la Ferre, through the exertions of M. de La Dauversiére, a devout client of Saint Joseph, who had already erected a chapel and formed a sodality to honor his holy Protector. He had indeed been supernaturally shown that he was to found an

* Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, *I.* 328.
† Shea, *History of the Catholic Missions*, 178. Garnier's letters.
‡ Faillon, Vie de Mlle. Mance, I. 36.
§ Faillon, *Vie de Mme. d' Youville*, 277.

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order to honor Saint Joseph, as guide and tutor of Jesus Christ the poor, king of the poor, and founder of Evangelical poverty.* Mother Jumeau, one of the earliest members of the order, destined long to be superior at Montreal, devoted to the sick in this congregation a life and health which Saint Joseph had restored to her by a miracle.† The devotion of Margaret Brurgeoys, the foundress of the Sisters of the Congregation, towards Saint Joseph and the Holy Family, is well known : and one of her successors, Sister Barbier, in 1697 made a pilgrimage to place the Congregation under the patronage of Saint Joseph, and received the assurance that the Spouse of the Mother of God would never withhold his protection.‡ It would not be easy to detail the marks of devotion manifested towards the Holy Patriarch by the Ursulines, Hospital Nuns, Gray Sisters and Sisters of the Congregation. Nor has this devotion been unrewarded. Even in our day, a Sister of Charity at Quebec bears the name of Saint Joseph, to commemorate a miraculous restoration to health which she obtained by a novena to the foster-father of Jesus ; a novena undertaken when all hope of recovery was past, undertaken almost reluctantly through holy obedience. So sudden was her cure, that the Vicar-General, who had seen her dying, first knew of her recovery by finding her ministering at the bedside of the Archbishop, who was also stretched on a bed of pain.§

Nor has the United States been devoid of veneration for this great Saint. The oldest church in the part formerly under British rule, is the little church of Saint Joseph's in

* Faillon, *Vie de Mlle. Mance, I.* i.–xxxvi. Halyot, *Histoire des ordres Religieux* (Edn. Migne), II. 702. De Courcy, *Les Servantes de Dieu en Canada.* 33.

† Faillon, *Vie de Mlle. Mance, II.* 23.

‡ Faillon, *Vie de la Sœur Bourgeois II.* 128.

§ Memoir kindly furnished me by the Very Rev. C. F. Cazeaux.

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Philadelphia, dedicated to the Saint almost a century and a quarter since,* and destined to become, we may say, the cradle of the Visitation Order founded beneath its shadow by the venerable Alice Lalor.

Mother Seton, in founding her order which has wiped away so many a tear from the eye of wretchedness, which has educated so many, cared for so many orphans, and in the hour of pestilence given so many martyrs to charity, wished her community to be called "Sisters of Saint Joseph," for "it was the dictate of her piety to place herself and society, sisters and children, under the protecting care of Saint Joseph, the faithful Guardian of the Son of God on earth,"† and those who followed her rule always bore the name of Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, and the mother house at Emmetsburg still glories in the name.

Still more recently Sisters of St. Joseph, of a congregation founded in France about the middle of the seventeenth century, has spread its houses over many States in the Union, renewing the devotion of the faithful to the spouse of Mary, no less by name than by their holy lives. It was, too, to the patronage of Saint Joseph, who appeared to her in childhood, that Miss Allen, a daughter of the celebrated Ethan Allen, though brought up in the desolating doctrines of infidelity which her father professed, owed her vocation to the faith, and still more to the religious state; for she died a Sister of Saint Joseph at the Hotel Dieu in Montreal, an edifying member of the congregation founded by Mother Mary de la Ferre.‡

Nor have the prelates and clergy been less devout to the

* De Courcy, *The Catholic Church in the United States*, 210.
† White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton*, (1st ed.) p. 254.
‡ Faillon, *Vie de Mlle. Mance*, II. 298.

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Patron of North America. We need here but cite the name of the venerable and saintly Bishop Flaget of Bardstown and Louisville. In confirmation he assumed the name of Joseph from his devotion to the spouse of the Immaculate Mary, and his biographer, the learned Doctor Spalding, now Bishop of Louisville, says: "Towards Saint Joseph he cherished a tender devotion; he confidently committed himself and all his spiritual children and friends to his patronage, frequently breathing the prayer: 'Saint Joseph, my Patron, pray for all the friends who have thought of me.'" *

Churches, colleges, convents, Societies and Sodalities in various parts, which it would be long to enumerate, cover the land, and attest the increase of devotion to the illustrious Saint Joseph.†

Let us each, in our own sphere, do all we can to propagate so consoling a devotion, the progress of which the eloquent Faber thus beautifully describes:

"Devotion to St. Joseph lay as it were dormant in the Church. Not that there was any thing new to be known about him, or any fresh revelation to be made of him. He belonged exclusively to the Sacred Infancy. The beginning of St. Matthew's Gospel contained him. By two evangelists he had been left in complete silence, and the third had barely named him in the genealogy. Tradition held some scanty notices of him; but they had no light but what they borrowed from St. Matthew. All we have now of St. Joseph was there then; only the sense of the faithful had not taken it up; God's time was not yet come. The sense of the faithful was

* Bishop Spalding, Life of the Rt. Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget, 23, 101.

† Five of the thirty Catholic colleges in the United States bear the name of St. Joseph.

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not like the complete science of the apostles. It was not equal to it: it had to grow to it, to master it, to fill it out with devotions, to animate it with institutions, to submit to it as a perfectly administered hierarchy. But God's time came for this dear devotion; and it came like all His gifts, when times were dark and calamities were rife.

"Beautiful Provence! it rose up in the west from your delightful land, like the cloud of delicate almond blossom that seems to float and shine between heaven and earth over your fields in spring. It rose from Confraternity in the white city of Avignon, and was cradled by the swift Rhone, that river of martyr memories, that runs by Lyons, Orange, Vienne and Arles, and flows into the same sea that laves the shores of Palestine. The land which the contemplative Magdalen had consecrated by her hermit life, and where the songs of Martha's school of virgins had been heard praising God, and where Lazarus had worn a mitre instead of a grave-cloth, it was there that he, who was so marvellously Mary and Martha combined, first received the glory of his devotion. Then it spread over the Church. Gerson was raised up to be its doctor and theologian; and St. Theresa to be its saint; and St. Francis of Sales to be its popular teacher and missioner. The houses of Carmel were like the holy house of Nazareth to it, and the colleges of the Jesuits its peaceful sojourns in dark Egypt. The contemplative took it up and fed upon it: the active laid hold of it, and nursed the sick and fed the hungry in its name. The working people fastened on it, for both the saint and his devotion were of them. The young were drawn to it, and it made them pure; the aged rested on it, for it made them peaceful. St. Sulpice took it, and it became the spirit of the Secular Clergy. And when the great Society of Jesus had taken refuge in the Sacred Heart, and the Fathers of the Sacred Heart were keeping their lamps burning ready

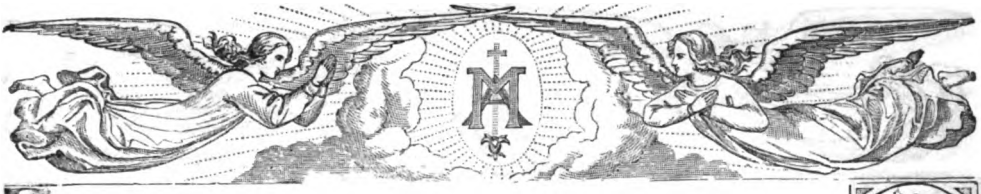


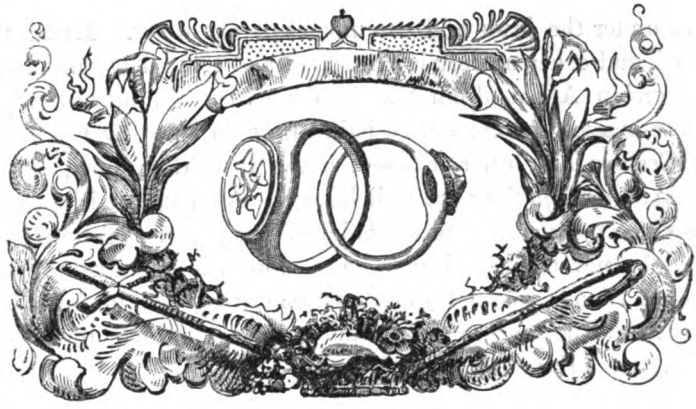
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for the resurrection of the Society, devotion to St. Joseph was their stay and their consolation, and they cast the seeds of a new devotion to the Heart of Joseph, which will some day flourish and abound. So it gathered into itself orders and congregations, high and low, young and old, ecclesiastical and lay, schools and confraternities, hospitals, orphanages and penitentiaries, every where holding up Jesus, every where hand in hand with Mary, every where the refreshing shadow of the Eternal Father. Then when it had filled Europe with its odor, it went over the Atlantic, plunged into the damp umbrage of the backwoods, embraced all Canada, became a mighty missionary power, and tens of thousands of savages filled the forests and the rolling prairies at sundown with hymns to St. Joseph, the praises of the foster-father of our Lord."



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CHAPTER VI.

OF THE RELICS AND PORTRAITS OF SAINT JOSEPH.

THE first portrait of the putative father of Jesus and most holy spouse of the Blessed Virgin, was a sketch of the Divine pencil, which deigned with infinite wisdom to sketch it in the fortunes of that ancient Joseph, the prime minister of the Egyptian monarchy, regarded as the father of Pharao, who was sovereign of that empire. Of the portraits made by art, it is not easy to say when precisely they begun ; but we may conjecture that antiquity, so appreciative of painting and so accustomed to portray great men and friends, would not deny the putative father of Jesus this honor. Paintings were anciently prohibited among the Jews, and so we find no pictures of Saint Joseph in Judea ; but we may easily conceive that his form was portrayed by the Egyptians, and others who did not







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live under the laws and ceremonies of the Jews. Hyacinth Serri, and other modern critics, cited and refuted by the pious Cistercian Abbot, John Sianda, deny the antiquity even of those images and celebrated paintings mentioned by Eusebius of Cesarea, and other critics of better taste than Serri, whose extravagant opinions are well known. Although it is not my province to substantiate the order of the pictures of the Holy Family, nevertheless, I give in a note the remarks of the Abbot Sianda against those austere critics, and in favor of crediting the antiquity of the paintings, which represent Christ and His most holy Mother.*

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* Saint Luke was an excellent painter: hence he had every facility for portraying both our Saviour and the Blessed Virgin for the consolation of the faithful. The portrait sent by Christ to Abgarus is supposed however not to have been drawn by human hands, but to have been miraculously imprinted on a cloth which Christ held to his face. This was long preserved at Edessa, thence transferred to Constantinople, and finally to Rome . . . Saint Luke painted several portraits of the Blessed Virgin . . . He was not only a painter, but a sculptor. Modern critics absolutely deny that Saint Luke was a painter, but many classic authors hold the contrary. It is not convincing to tell us that in that age painting had declined and was in little use, because the same can be said of medicine in that age, when it consisted at most in the use of the bath and some herbs to check all diseases; yet Saint Luke is canonized as the most dear physician of Saint Paul . . . Nor is it sufficient to say that painting was forbidden among the Hebrews, and that Saint Luke consequently could not have painted the Blessed Virgin's portrait; for he was a Greek, not a Hebrew, born at Antioch, and taught painting by the Greeks, with whom it was a most honorable and common art. We have very ancient tablets which represent Saint Luke painting her portrait . . . O that our modern critics, who attack ancient traditions, would apply to themselves the words of Saint Bernard: Quid sibi tutius revelatum jactant, quod tot effugerit Sanctos, præterierit sapientes—"What is this which they boast of as so safely revealed to them, after escaping so many saints, so many learned men?" So too of this story (he speaks of the monk Luke, said by these critics to have flourished in the eighth century, and to be the author of the paintings ascribed to Saint Luke.) It is proved to a demonstration that, long before the year 800, miraculous images of the Blessed Virgin were venerated in the West. SIANDA (Cistercian Abbot), *Life of the Blessed Virgin, ch.* xli.

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With regard to the portraits of Saint Joseph, I concede to the assailants of ancient paintings, that Saint Joseph was not portrayed in the first ages of the Church ; but no one will dare to deny that, in the last four centuries, devotion has consecrated to Saint Joseph more statues and paintings than antiquity did in fourteen. To what part of Christendom shall we go, where there are not statues and paintings of Saint Joseph ? What house is so unblest, what family so unhappy, as not to have some picture of the most holy spouse of the Mother of God ? In the Catholic States of Europe, and especially in Italy, we see and admire at every step excellent paintings, as well in churches as in palaces and private houses, among which the two paintings preserved at Bologna are the finest, respected as triumphs of art in that city where nothing common can win admiration. One is a fresco, representing the death of Saint Joseph, attended by Jesus and Mary, in the Monté chapel in the church of Saint Catherine of Bologna. This work, according to Trombelli, is due to the pencil of the famous Franceschini, and has been repeatedly copied.* The other painting is without the church of the barefooted Carmelites on the Strada Romana, or highway leading to Rome.

In the imperial city of Mexico and in Puebla, it would be difficult to count the paintings of Saint Joseph, produced to the general applause by the Apelles of the New World. The names of these painters are usually on their works, and are Ibarra, Correa, Cabrera, Vallejo, Rodriguez, Morlet of Mexico, Carnero, Berrueco, Gutierrez, Talavera, and Majon of Puebla.

The relics of this great Saint are not like statues and pictures ; these can scarcely be enumerated, and the former are

* Trombelli, *Part II. ch.* xxi. *num.* 6.

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very few. No part of Saint Joseph's body has been found in this world; hence, it is commonly believed that his body, united to his soul, is in heaven. But several churches venerate what are called sanctified relics. Perugia, a city of Umbria, in the States of the Church, has the rare happiness of possessing the nuptial ring given by Saint Joseph to the Blessed Virgin in token or pledge of marriage. Papebroke and Sandinus mention this relic.* Sedelmayr adds, that the ring is kept in a golden shrine with eleven keys, and he states, moreover, that it has a proper feast, and that it is more ancient than the feast of the espousals.† A more detailed account of this relic will be found in the work of Pope Benedict XIV., on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin.‡

The Camaldolese fathers, at Florence, have in their Church of the Angels a staff of Saint Joseph, said to have been presented to their father-general, Ambrose, by Gregory, Patriarch of Constantinople, elected in the year 1446; and who, seeing his people most obstinate in their schism, abandoned them and came to Rome, bringing, as Philip Venuti says,§ many precious relics, still preserved in Italy, and among others, as is most probable, in the opinion of Trombelli, this staff which Ambrose placed in his church, as a precious relic received from the hands of that patriarch. Severe critics do not recognize this relic, not being satisfied with this proof, which is based simply on the statement of the father-general.

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* Sunt hæc apud Bollandos; annulum, virginalis conjugii arrham miraculis probatum, servari Perusii in Umbria. (Sandinus, *Hist. Sacræ Familiæ*, 397, § 12.)

† Festum annuli est longe antiquius festo Desponsationis, sicut enim religiose modo asservatur Perusii in capsula aurea sub undecim clavium custodia, ac ibidem colitur cultu respectivo sub traditione accepta a primitiva Ecclesia. (Sedelmayr, *Theologia Mariana, num* 2249.)

‡ Benedict XIV., *De festis B. M. V. Part II.* § 3.

§ Philippus Venuti, *Dissert.* 6. *de Cruce Cortonensi.*

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Nevertheless, Father Ricca relates some miracles wrought by the application of this staff.*

In the Church of Saint Cecilia, at Rome, beyond the Tiber, is venerated a portion of the chlamys or cloak of Saint Joseph, in which he received the new-born Saviour, and another in the Church of Saint Athanasia, with a cloth of many colors, part of another mantle of Saint Joseph, in which Jesus was wrapped at his birth.† A considerable portion of this was cut off for the discalceated Carmelites of Antwerp. In Bologna, at the Church of Saint Joseph, which is towards Montagnola, is preserved a portion of the garment of the holy patriarch, and in the Church of Saint Dominic, a small portion of his cloak.‡ In the chapel of the Pueblo Tepotzatlan, in the vicinity of Mexico, is also venerated a very small portion of this mantle. It resembles in color the chlamys or cloak venerated in the Church of Saint Athanasia at Rome. There are other relics at the Santa Casa of Loretto, common to the foster-father of Jesus and his most holy spouse, which are there shown and exposed to the veneration of pilgrims.

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* P Ricca, *Della Chiese Fiorentine, II.* 77.

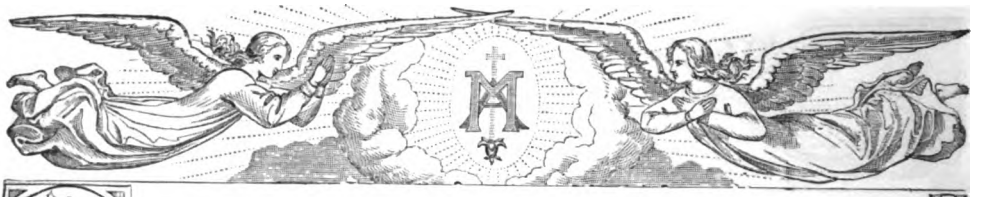
† Papebroke, *Acta Sanctorum, ad diem* 19 *Martii*, p. 19. num. 55.

‡ Masina, *Bolonia perlustrata.*





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CHAPTER VII.

PATRONAGE OF SAINT JOSEPH.

SAINT BERNARD, speaking of the saints in his sermons, says that they were born to instruct us by their example, and died to enter heaven and become the protectors of those still in this world.* This expression of Saint Bernard applies to all the saints, and in an especial degree to the father of Jesus, and most worthy spouse of Mary, who, after enlightening the world with the rare example of his humility, love of God, faith, constancy, purity and obedience, ascended triumphantly with his risen Son to heaven, to be seated near that throne at which the memorials of our petitions are presented and urged.

* "In terris visus est, ut esset exemplo: in cœlum levatus est, ut sit patrocinio."—"He was seen on earth to be an example; he was raised to heaven to be a patron." (SAINT BERNARD, *Sermo de S. Victore.*)



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Hence we may in a manner say, availing ourselves of the words in which the Evangelist Saint John describes the intercession of Jesus,* we have an advocate who receives our petitions, that from his hands they may pass to those of Christ, and from His to His Father's. Gerson calls Saint Joseph a powerful intercessor with his spouse the Blessed Virgin, and her Son Jesus.† Bernardine de Bustos, beside the intercessory powers, places in his hand ‡ one of the keys of Paradise, and might put all; for it seems by the effects, that the Almighty has placed all this world under the empire or shadow of his putative father, represented by that Joseph to whom Pharao committed all his monarchy, reserving only precedency and the rights of the throne. The Hebrews said anciently that the Lord God of Israel had reserved to himself four keys: the key of generation or life; the key of sustenance; the key of rain, and the key of the grave or resurrection; but after Saint Joseph was honored with the ministry of our redemption, invested with the character and authority of spouse of Mary, and all the rights of a father over the Man-God, all the keys were, as his favors show, placed in his hands.§ A divine liberality and favor, which we may confirm by an eloquent passage of Trombelli, who, speaking of the patronage of Saint Joseph, says: "Long since have the faithful begun to acknowledge and publish the efficacy of Saint Joseph's intercession, so that Gerson ‖ invoked his pa-

* We have an advocate with the Father. (I. John ii.)

† GERSON, *Epistola ad Ducem Biturícensem.*

‡ Cum Christus haberet claves paradisi et unam dederit Matri suæ, dedit et unam suo Patri Joseph. (BERNARDINE DE BUSTOS, *Marial. Serm.* 22.)

§ Pulchre Hebræi notant, Deum sibi soli quatuor claves naturæ reservasse: prima est clavis vitæ, seu generationis, ut patet ex *Gen.* xxx. 1; secunda, clavis alimoniæ, *Psalm* cxliv. 16; tertia, clavis pluviarum (*Deut.* xxviii. 12.); quarta est clavis sepulchrorum (*Ezech.* xxxvii. 12.) TIRINUS, *in Gen.* xxx. 2.

‖ GERSON, sub finem *Josephinæ.*

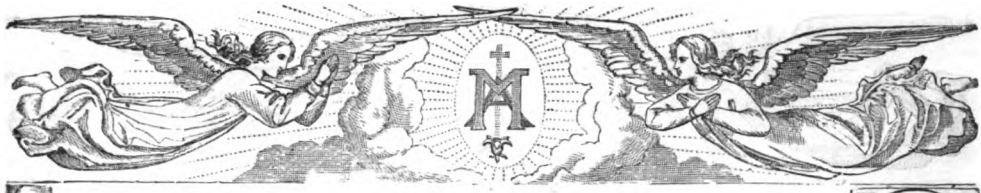
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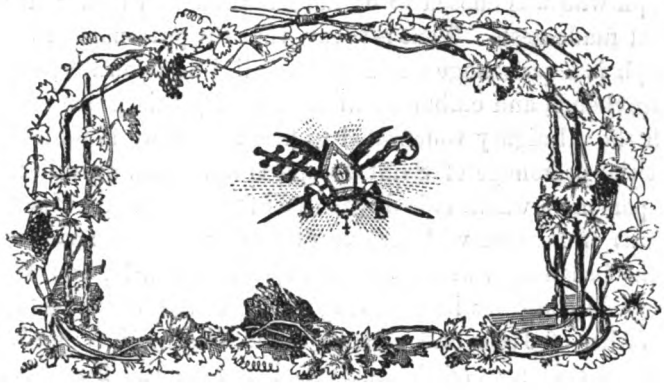
tronage not only for himself, but also for the afflicted Church, expressly protesting his irrefragable conviction, that the most potent intercession of the holy spouse of the Mother of God was to restore to the Church that peace and serenity of which the great schism had deprived it. "Illustrious patriarch Joseph, renowned descendant of David," says this holy chancellor invoking our saint, "guardian of Mary, faithful minister of Jesus, who didst know that mystery which the first ages knew not . . . I implore thee to look with kindly eyes on this unhappy world, disturbed with so many evils, &c."

Saint Bernardine of Sienna closes his panegyric imploring the patronage of Saint Joseph no less fervently than Gerson did. I add his very words, that his petition may serve as a light and guide, to enable us to recur in our afflictions to an advocate so powerful with Jesus and Mary. "Remember us, O blessed Joseph, and by the power of thy prayers with thy reputed Son, intercede for us, and obtain also favor for us with that Virgin, thy most happy spouse, who was Mother of a Son, who reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen."



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CHAPTER VIII.

THE PATRONAGE OF SAINT JOSEPH IS UNIVERSAL, AND IS THE MOST POWERFUL AMONG THE INTERCESSIONS OF THE SAINTS.

IN the person of the Blessed Virgin* the Man-God gave mortals a universal mother, the Evangelist St. John, taking possession in the name of all,† and in the amiable spouse of the Mother of God, there was given to the human lineage by the most benign Father, that same

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* "Maria non solum fuit Mater Christi singularis, sed mater omnium fidelium universalis"—"Mary was not only the single Mother of Christ, but also the universal mother of all the faithful." (St. Bonaventure, *Speculum*, *ch* viii.)

† "Then he saith to his disciple, Behold thy mother: and from that hour the disciple took her to his own." (John xix. 27.) "Mystice intelligimus in Joanne omnes animas electorum, quorum per electionem Virgo facta est mater."—"In John we mystically understand all the souls of the elect, whose Mother the Blessed Virgin became by election." (St. Bernardine of Sienna, *Tom. I. Serm.* 55.)



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Joseph who was chosen to be the guardian and father of the Word made flesh. That is to say, that the patronage of Saint Joseph is a patronage extending to all, like paternity, which comprehends and embraces all men.* By this grace wherewith the Almighty vouchsafed to honor man, we must believe that the patronage of Saint Joseph is universal, as well from the person to whom it is directed, as for the benefits which he obtains of heaven, without excepting any class of necessities. In the benefits, of which we shall speak presently, and which the world confesses its receiving through the intercession of the father of Jesus and spouse of the Virgin Mary, we have constant evidences of this universal patronage. But I wish to add the authority of some theologians, cited in favor of his opinion by Sedelmayr. Joseph, says this theologian,† is the general advocate in all our necessities. So have great divines thought, and their opinion is upheld by four proofs, based on the dignity and renowned merits of him who was guardian and reputed father of the Man-God, and who was prefigured in that Joseph, at whose disposal the king of

* As God wished Saint Joseph to stand in the place of a father to his Son, so He gave him the grace of paternity towards all men. (SISTER MAGDALEN OF ST. JOSEPH. *See her Life, Book II. ch.* iv.)

† Sanctus Josephus est patronus universalis pro omnibus necessitatibus. Ita Carthagena (Lib. xviii. homilia 14.) allegans pro se testes omni exceptione majores. Probatur 1o. ex scriptura, in qua expresse dicitur: *Quidquid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, hoc faciam, ut glorificetur Pater in filio,* (Joan. xiv. 13.) *et si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo dabit vobis* . . . Vere tamen etiam intelligi possunt in sensu literali de S. Josepho, quia, ut S Augustinus (Doctrina Christiana, Lib. III. c. 27.) ait: *Omnis sensus ædificativus charitatis et non contrarius contextui, prævisus fuit a Spiritu Sancto.* Probatur 2o. ex Genesi xli. 56, dicitur universaliter: *Ite ad Joseph.* Sicut autem hoc de prorege Ægypti dictum est; ita etiam intelligendum est de S. Josepho Mariæ sponso . . . Tum quod ille hujus sit figura, figuratum autem semper prævaleat figuræ; tum quod sub hoc dicto: *Ite ad Joseph,* uterque Joseph literaliter intelligi possit, cum Christus Dominus, si velit, nos converti ad unum ex Sanctis pro nostra necessitate, tunc certe nos mittet ad Joseph: *Ite ad Joseph.* (SEDELMAYR, *Theologia Mariæ.* Part II. q. 1. art. 17. n. 993.)

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Egypt placed all the graces and favors that his vassals could ask of their sovereign. "Go to Joseph," was the answer of Pharao to the memorials presented at his throne, the Almighty signifying by this disposition the future greatness of another Joseph, who was to be the spouse of the queen of heaven and earth, father of Jesus, and the confidential servant of his Lord. And we even believe, says Sedelmayr, that Joseph's authority is so great in heaven, and so great the gratitude which Christ shows him for the love and fidelity with which he accompanied him for the space of thirty years, that he requires the petitions of other saints to pass through the hands of Saint Joseph, and that he should, in our way of expressing it, state to the Eternal Father the substance of the petitions, which, when adjusted to what may be duly sought, are granted without limitation, and with such promptitude, that God seems to obey Saint Joseph, when he entreats him as spouse of Mary and putative father of the Incarnate Son.

This solid and pious doctrine of Sedelmayr has in its favor the great authority of Saint Teresa, who, relying on experience, has left us in writing a most beautiful and complete history of the general patronage of Saint Joseph in these words, which by their very simplicity manifest the truth: "I took for my advocate and master the glorious Saint Joseph, and I recommended myself much to him. Then I felt to a demonstration that this my father and master had delivered me both from this affliction, and from still greater ones in point of honor and the loss of my soul, granting me far more than I had asked. Up to this time I cannot remember having asked him for any thing which he did not obtain. The great favors which Our Lord has done me by the intercession of this blessed saint, and the dangers of soul and body from which he has delivered me, fill me with awe and wonder. It seems that to other saints Our Lord has given power to



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succor us in only one kind of necessity; but this glorious saint, I know by my own experience, assists us in all kinds of necessities: hence Our Lord, it appears, wishes us to understand that, as he was obedient to him when on earth (for he was called his father, and being as it were his tutor, he could command him), so now in heaven he grants him whatever he asks. Many persons, whom I have advised to commend themselves to Saint Joseph, have experienced this . . . Would that I could persuade all men to be devout to this glorious saint by reason of the great experience I have had of the blessings which he obtains from God. I have never known any one who was truly devoted to him, who performed particular devotions to his honor, that did not advance more in virtue, for he assists in a special manner those souls who recommend themselves to him. It seems to me that for years I have not asked any thing in this respect that has not been granted. And when my petition has not been well ordered, the saint has directed it to my greater good. Were I capable of giving authority to what I write, I should detail the benefits which this glorious saint has done me and others . . . I only request, for the love of God, that whoever will not believe me, will test the truth of what I say; for he will see by experience, how great a blessing it is to recommend one's self to this glorious Patriarch and be devout to him. Those chiefly who are given to prayer should be attached to him, and take him as a master and director, so as not to err."*

Such are the words of the seraphic mother, and they urge us to seek with him consolation in our tribulations, that, consoled by him, we may, like Saint Teresa, console those who are oppressed on all sides. What patronage among the

* St. Teresa, Life, c. vi.

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blessed can be considered more general? This is realizing, perfectly, the meaning of the words "beautiful tree," which, according to those skilled in Hebrew, are the interpretation of the name Joseph,* for by his universal succor he extends his shadow to the four quarters of the globe, excepting no man, and no man's necessities. The Scythians said to Alexander: "Had the gods given thee a body as great as the thoughts of thy soul and the desires of thy heart, thou wouldst lay one hand on the East and another on the West."† But we can in more truth say, that, as the intercession and patronage of Saint Joseph is proportioned to his title of father of Jesus and spouse of the Queen of the Elect, he has one hand on the East and the other on the West; because the influence of his protection extends over the whole world, enlightening and doing good to all, with so much liberality, that we must consider as more than fulfilled in Saint Joseph that sentence of the generous Titus, the Roman Emperor,‡ who used to say, that no one should leave the presence of a prince disconsolate, and that the day was lost in which his subjects had not reaped some benefit from his hand.

The second part of this chapter is the power and efficacy of Saint Joseph's protection, of whom, as likened in his intercession to his foster-son Jesus, we may not only use the words of Saint Paul: "Ever living to intercede for us;"§ but say that his intercession is the most powerful and efficacious among the prayers of the Saints, from his authority as father and spouse, whereby he asks graces of Jesus, and favors of Mary. These words "Give us this day our daily bread,"

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* Joseph, id est, *pulchra arbor*. (CARTHAGENA, Lib. XVIII. Hom. 12. de S. Josepho.)

† QUINTUS CURTIUS, Lib. VII. ch. 22.

‡ SUETONIUS, *Life of Titus*.

§ Heb. vii. 25.

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says Origen,* seem more a command than a petition. I do not adopt his opinion as to those who ask only as servants or friends; but when Saint Joseph is the advocate, I confess with Gerson,† that his petitions seem rather precepts than memorials. Joseph asks as one who commands, and when he asks his son Jesus and Mary his spouse, his hint is a command; because in Heaven, if we may use the expression, Saint Joseph as putative father of the Man-God, and spouse of the Queen of the world, has a certain right to command, I mean, such a merit, that his requests will be granted.

The matter is as sublime as it is abundant, and books might easily be filled with it by those intellects and pens, capable of sustaining the weight of such great subjects. But that I have been unable to explain, will be seen as in a brief compendium, in the eloquent lines where two writers applaud the general and efficacious patronage of the most worthy spouse of the Mother of God. The first is Patrignani, who says, "that it is an observation of Saint Bernard, that Egypt, when it set its eyes on the gifts of the first Joseph, ran to him as though charmed by his wonderful attractions. This was but a kind of prophecy of what was to come to pass, when men should see the dignity, the benefits and merits of that Joseph who was father of Jesus and spouse of Mary; for to him was to run not one kingdom but all Christendom,‡ and even the barbarous nations that dwelt like wild beasts in the forest. I mean, that devotion to Saint Joseph, which is inseparable from his powerful

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* *Da nobis* non est orantes sed imperantes (ORIGEN, *in Matt.* vii. 11.)

† Intercedente te, et si fas est dicere, quodam jure tuo jubente, gloriosissime Joseph Vir Mariæ, de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus. (GERSON, *Serm. de Nativitate Mariæ.*) Joseph non impetrat, sed imperat. (*Id.*) Deum enim sponsam et filium orat, imperium est, non oratio. (*Id. Serm. de S. Josepho.*)

‡ Joseph universam Ægyptum post se currere fecit. (SAINT BERNARD, *Serm.* 11. *in Cantica.*)



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patronage, has not only extended over all Europe, the centre of religion, but has also passed to Africa, Asia and America. If we go to Turkey, there we shall find the Greeks like the Latins, eminent for devotion to Saint Joseph, allured by his intercession and influence in heaven. If we enter the uncleared forests of New France, we meet an Iroquois, who, taking the name of Joseph in baptism, was the first Christian of those parts. If, crossing the seas, we reach the burning sands of Paraguay, we shall meet numbers of that new Christendom, who glory in the name of Joseph, and we shall wonder at the happiness with which the love, devotion, and patronage of this great Saint, crossing the ocean, has rushed to take possession of those unhappy nations. Let us follow the apostolic missionaries to Tonquin, and we shall moor in peaceful havens through the protection of Mary's spouse, whose glorious name the first Christian of that conquest took. If we would reach the furthest Ind, or East or West, our heart will bound with joy to hear ever repeated on every side, the lovely name of Joseph.

If we seek the reason why the Saint has made such numberless conquests in those vast provinces where idolatry reigned, it will not be difficult to find it, and it is because, as Jesus in his infancy chose to enter Egypt in Joseph's arms, so, too, He will have the faith enter these lands of the heathen, under the patronage of Saint Joseph; who, according to Saint Bernardine of Siena,* holds in his hands the keys which opened the New Testament and closed the synagogue of Moses. . . . . Hence, Gerson most wisely said before the Council of Constance, that, to remedy the evils with which a fomidable schism threatened the West, the cultus

* Ipse est clavis veteris Testamenti. (St. Bernardine of Siena, *Serm. de S. Joseph*, cap. iii. art. 3. p. 235.)



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of Saint Joseph should be promoted, the patronage of Saint Joseph implored, for he was like a star announcing calm amid tempests; having been guardian and protector of Christ, Saint Joseph must also be protector of Christendom. The Council approved the noble thought of Gerson, and the Church began to look upon Saint Joseph as its most universal protector; a title wherewith Isidore Isolanus * applauds his patronage . . . According to him, the filiation of Saint Joseph is numerous, like the family of Christ, which is Christendom.†

The second writer is the Abate John Chrysostom Trombelli, who thus shows the efficacy and extent of Saint Joseph's patronage. "Orientals are as convinced of the power and extent of his intercession, as the Latins are. This is well shown in that life of such ancient date preserved among the Copts or primitive Egyptians, and published in Latin by Isidore Isolanus, who ascribes its translation to the year 1340. This life, as I have noted, is full of fables; but withal, it gives us to understand the idea which they entertained of Saint Joseph's patronage; for, according to it, Christ said of his reputed father: "I will bless and aid all the faithful who, on that day in which thy memory, Joseph, is celebrated, shall offer sacrifice to God, and I will blot from the book the sins of whoever meditates on thy life, thy toils and thy death. The plague and sudden death shall not enter the house where thy memory is celebrated."

"As the patronage of Saint Joseph is so general and so efficacious, all should implore his intercession. The innocent, to preserve the first grace which they have received. Sinners, to shake off the burden which oppresses them, and obtain

* Joseph patronus militantis Ecclesiæ. (ISOLANUS, *Summa de donis S. Josephi.*)
† PATRIGNANI, *Lib. I. cap.* vii.

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pardon of their sins. Those who have not lost virginal integrity should invoke him, because in Joseph they have so sublime and glorious an example, that he was, by divine selection, the guardian of the most excellent and immaculate of virgins. The married also need the patronage and assistance of Saint Joseph, to imitate him in the care of the family committed to their care. The continent should not forget to recur to the intercession of the holy patriarch, confident that he will procure them aid, and inspire them with thoughts to fill their hearts with strength and valor to resist the suggestions and deceits to which they are more especially exposed. Those in trouble, in fine, should choose Saint Joseph as their protector, to obtain a consolation and calm, like that which heaven gave him, mingling the bitter of tribulation with the sweet of celestial alleviation." *

* TROMBELLI, *Life of St. Joseph, Part II. ch.* vi.





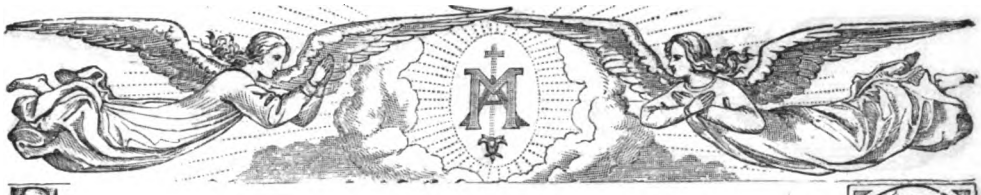
CHAPTER IX.

SAINT JOSEPH SHOULD BE CHOSEN AS AN ADVOCATE TO OBTAIN OF GOD A HAPPY DEATH.

IN the father of Jesus and spouse of the Virgin Mary, the Almighty deposited the treasure of his greatest felicity, and, according to Isidore Isolanus,* he placed also the gifts and treasures, which he did not vouchsafe to those patriarchs, whom nevertheless he filled with blessings, as founders and first pillars of his people. In this most holy patriarch shines the treasury of those virtues which scarcely had an example to imitate in those heroic deeds which antiquity beheld in the heroes praised by the Scriptures. In his hands are the keys that open the gates, through which favors come down to men ; because Saint Joseph, as father of the

* Great men will seek to fathom the gifts of God hidden in Joseph, and will find a treasure such as they do not find among the Holy Fathers of the Old Testament. (ISIDORE ISOLANUS, *Summa de donis S. Joseph, part IV. ch.* 8.)

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Man-God, is more respected in heaven than that wise minister was on earth, in whose hands, saving the throne and royal purple, the monarch of Egypt placed the disposal of his graces and favors, which as sovereign he could confer.* These keys give to Saint Joseph's patronage an efficacy and power, that compel us to choose him as our advocate in that cause on which an eternity of weal or woe depends.

The first Joseph was styled in Egypt the saviour of the world, perhaps from his prefiguring the patronage of the father of that Jesus, who by his powerful intercession was to give eternal salvation to the dying, and to all mortals most powerful aids to obtain it. Hence we should choose him as our most special protector on that most formidable moment of our life. No strong arguments are necessary to induce this choice, for its advantage and utility commend it at first sight. Those who are born under the inviolable law of death, need an intercessor and an advocate to defend them, and obtain of God effective aid to triumph over those irreconcilable enemies, whose insolence is redoubled at the last moments of our life. And what defender can have more authority and influence with Jesus and Mary than Saint Joseph, who can speak in the presence of God as father, as tutor, as guardian and as spouse? Who of the blessed will more eagerly seek our glory, than he, who from his guardianship of the Mother of our Redeemer is called the Minister of our Salvation? Who at that most bitter hour of our existence will display more eloquence in our favor, than Joseph, who learned pity and eloquence from the bowels of the Incarnate Word and from the heart of the Mother of

* He said therefore to Joseph . . . Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth, all the people shall obey; only on the kingly throne will I be above thee. (Gen. xli. 40.)



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Mercy? Who will comfort us with more solicitude and more abundant consolation than that Saint of whom Rupert * says, that he is powerful with the very power of his Sovereign? From these motives, we know that in all parts of Christendom Saint Joseph is invoked as the protector of the agonizing, and that many churches celebrate the memory of his most precious death or transit.

I lack words to persuade men as I would desire to choose so great a Saint as their advocate; and I will accordingly speak by taking the pen from the hands of other writers and the words from their lips. "All," says the incomparable orator and theologian Father Paul Segneri,† "all choose Saint Joseph as their protector, knowing that he has claims enough to save them and power to defend him. Priests take him as their advocate, to learn of the Saint the respect with which they should regard God when they take Him in their hands in the tremendous sacrifice of the altar. The married, to maintain concord. Virgins, to preserve integrity and purity of soul and body. Travellers and pilgrims, to have on their way a most faithful conductor. Mechanics and the poor, to bear with patience their toils and necessity. The plebeian, and more especially those nobles who need powerful succor, in order to conform to the reverses of fortune which have reduced them to such a state. Fathers and heads of families, to direct properly those who are under their power. Princes, to keep their subjects in due subjection, although they may be otherwise powerful. But among all, those should most earnestly choose Saint Joseph as their advocate, who desire to die the peaceful death of the just, a precious death in the eyes of our Lord." The reason of the necessity

* Joseph potentia regis potens. (RUPERT, Lib. III. in Cantica.)
† SEGNERI, *Predica di S. Giuseppe.*

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and efficacy of this patronage is given by Segneri, and is found in the very titles of Saint Joseph.

Father Joseph Anthony Patrignani afterwards amplified it in these terms of confidence: "Joseph is one of the potentates in heaven, where he dwells as father of the King and as spouse of the Queen, the Mistress of the Universe; titles which make him so formidable to the infernal spirits, that they dare not draw near the couch of the dying Christian who has implored his protection. The devil knows too that Jesus, in consequence of Joseph's having delivered him from the cruel sword with which Herod menaced Him, has conceded him as an especial grace the defence of those who at the approach of death implore his favor. Hence demons flee from the spot where they know by experience that they must meet a combatant who measures his victorious arms with the batteries and engines of those obstinate enemies, who, at the last moment of life, assail the dying with all the efforts of wrath. He favors all who invoke him; but with more solicitude those who in life show more devotion to him." *

The Abate Trombelli, desirous that all, with the object of obtaining a death precious in the eyes of God, should place themselves under the shadow of that tree, whose branches cover the whole habitable earth, speaks of this patronage and of the necessity which they have of Saint Joseph's intercession, in these words, which shall crown our chapter, a final proof in confirmation of the opinion of Segneri and Patrignani. "But if the aid and patronage of Saint Joseph is ever seasonable, especially is it so, when that terrible moment approaches on which an eternity either of bliss or of torments depends. Saint Joseph passed from this life in the

* Patrignani, *Lib. II. cap.* 7.

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greatest tranquillity, assisted by Jesus and Mary. . . We should then recur to Saint Joseph, that by his pity and most powerful intercession he may obtain for us a true and hearty detestation of our sins. And then, if we have not a firm security, we shall at least have a well-founded confidence of having as assistants at our death (I say not visibly, as Joseph had, but invisibly) the same exalted personages.* By their assistance we shall overcome the temptations of the devil, and come forth triumphant, worthy to reign in Paradise. For this end let us now and in future recur frequently to Joseph, hearkening to the exhortations of Holy Church, which, after calling him 'the certain hope of our life and pillar of the world, 'earnestly conjures us to implore his assistance and intercession to live and die holily' and enjoy with him eternal bliss."†

There throned in power, let us his loving aid
With fervent prayers implore;
So may he gain us pardon in our need,
And peace for evermore.‡

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* TROMBELLI, *Life of Saint Joseph*, *Part II.* ch. vi. *num.* 11.
† Id.

‡ Ergo regnantem flagitemus omnes,
Adsit ut nobis, veniamque nostris
Obtinens culpis tribuat supernæ
Munera pacis.
Hymn for Lauds, feast of St. Joseph

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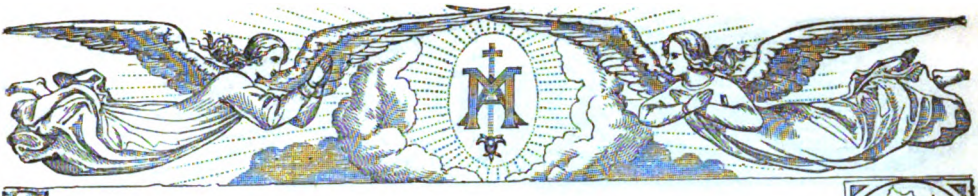
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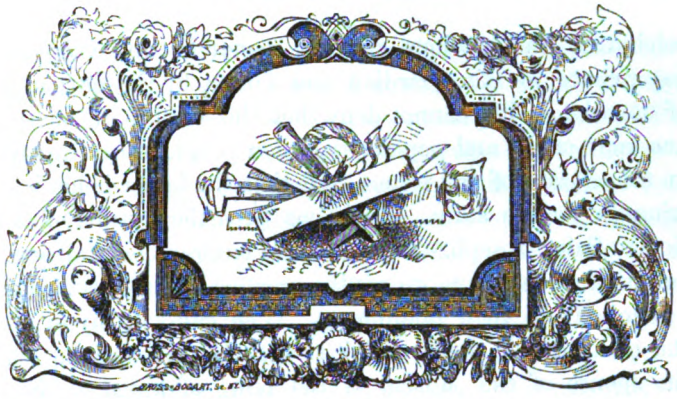


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CHAPTER X.

SPECIAL PATRONAGE OF SAINT JOSEPH IN SOME KINGDOMS OF EUROPE.

THE love and veneration which the Catholic States of Europe profess for Saint Joseph, is a strong proof of his patronage ; because they arise from the constant benefits with which the holy Patriarch favors those who implore his powerful intercession. It is not easy to describe his patronage perfectly, as the mercies by which it is proved, are innumerable. But not to pass over all in silence, I will give a slight sketch of these favors, citing the history which with zeal, elegance and erudition, the pious Patrignani has left us in his work. "The client of Saint Joseph." Truly does this writer say, that God has honored Saint Joseph in these last ages with a greatness of honors which has a certain likeness to the divine. From east to west He has made his name as amiable as it is



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celebrated and glorious, moving monarchs and subjects to pay tribute to His guardian and father, by the outpourings of devotion. We cannot deny that the worship of the saints has more credit and popularity, when people see it taken up in the closets of the prince, and that the latter holds it as a triumph for his state. Such has been the fortune of devotion to Saint Joseph. Nations have embraced it universally, and at the same time we see the greatest potentates zealously promote it in their dominions. Who can portray in words the greatness of that cordial tribute of veneration, which the spouse of the Mother of the King of kings receives in Germany, since the piety of that Leopold of glorious memory cherished the devotion in his court, and with signal affection extended it to all his empire? The kingdom of Bohemia was already under the tutelar patronage of Saint Joseph, and had proclaimed him PRESERVER OF PEACE, giving on the day of the oath and proclamation so splendid a feast, that it was renowned far and near as a triumph of devotion; but after the capital of Hungary had shaken off by the power of the Austrian arms the ancient and oppressive yoke of the Turk, when the victorious sovereign placed that kingdom too at the feet of Saint Joseph, the whole Roman Empire swore fealty to him as its general Protector. The pious Leopold, convinced that he should attribute the memorable victory to the Mother of God and her spouse, determined to show his gratitude, and obtained of the Apostolic see faculty to celebrate perpetually in all his kingdoms of Germany the feast of the espousals of the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph. The holy Patriarch received this grateful homage, and displaying by new marks his recent title of general Protector of the empire, he did the house of Austria the remarkable benefit of giving it the heir that for years had been desired in vain, till the Cæsar sought it of heaven through the intercession



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of Saint Joseph, to whom God has given that key of generation or life, anciently reserved exclusively to his Omnipotence. By this benefit he became not only the general Protector of the Empire, but the protector also of the house of Austria. On the birth of the new prince, the glorious name of Saint Joseph was repeated in accents of joyful triumph, and that name was given to the child in memory of the grace. On the death of Leopold, Joseph ascended the throne, and erected to the holy Patriarch, as to his signal benefactor, a statue in the great square of Vienna, his capital.

Not only has this empire experienced the patronage of Saint Joseph. France too has enjoyed it, receiving those great benefits and singular mercies, which examined in the crucible of the most searching criticism are given at length by the Bollandists.* In the kingdom of Spain, the centre of religion, the same patronage is manifested in proportion to the devotion which the seraphic Saint Teresa promoted, herself one of the most luminous stars in the Castilian heaven. Love for this holy Patriarch, which in the time of this virgin spread like fire through the hearts of Spanish piety, was changed to a conflagration when the court of that powerful kingdom obtained the feast of the espousals. From Spain this treasure passed to Belgium, where Saint Joseph chose, as the theatre of his patronage and wonder, the famous city of Antwerp, in which the pious family of Romer erected in his honor two such magnificent chapels that they are regarded as miracles of beauty. In one of these, that erected in the vale of Facontin, the beneficent protection of Saint Joseph has been so repeatedly manifested, that, in the short space of five years, it gave abundant matter for the history of his sovereign patronage.

* Acta Sanctorum, *ad diem* 19 *Martii*, § 10.

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In the island of Corsica devotion to the holy Patriarch flourishes so, that he has been chosen their Protector, and a church has been dedicated to him just without the capital, where his feast is annually celebrated with a procession and all possible pomp—both secular and regular clergy, the confraternities and the magistracy taking part, and offering a certain sum of money, which is laid on the altar. In Rome love and devotion to Saint Joseph not only flourish, but triumph. And his patronage will triumph with affection, which is inseparable from that love with which the holy patriarch reigns in the hearts of nations. "Throughout the kingdom of Portugal, as I have been informed by a person well instructed in the customs of that monarchy, Saint Joseph has always been held in great veneration; and it has increased since a prince named Joseph ascended the throne. In every part of that kingdom we find dedicated to this great Saint, magnificent churches, chapels, altars and convents, of both sexes created under his invocation. One of the principal divisions of Lisbon, the capital, bears the name of Saint Joseph. His feast is celebrated in all parts of the kingdom with great magnificence, in many preceded by a novena, with music, attended by a dense and devoted crowd of clients. Zeal for augmenting the honor and devotion of this most amiable Saint invents new incentives, new trophies, as we see by the beautiful painting set up in Lisbon in 1751, in the convent of Jesus, and known as "Saint Joseph of Patronage," it being the first venerated in that kingdom by that title. Piety was not satisfied with this demonstration, but on the 28th of March, 1758, erected a statue inscribed: "Saint Joseph, Father of mankind." This was, says my informant (Antonio Ribeiro, a native of that kingdom, now professor of philosophy in the seminary of Cesena), it seems to me, the first erected in Portugal with that title. King

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Joseph I. commanded this statue to be made at the urgent solicitation of Father John of Our Lady, who died in the odor of sanctity. It cost about two thousand cruzados or about one thousand dollars. The archbishop of Lacedemon, suffragan or auxiliar of the Cardinal Patriarch, blessed the statue in the monastery of Saint Vincent of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine; after which it was borne in solemn procession to the convent of Iabregas of the Franciscan Observantines, and there placed in the same chapel and on the same altar, where in 1745 King John V. had placed a beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin, at the instance of Father John of Our Lady."

In France the protection of Saint Joseph is evinced by the tongue of the countless benefits which Father Ricca recounts in his work on the Florentine Churches, and which are related by other historians whom Trombelli cites in his life of Saint Joseph.*

* TROMBELLI, Part II. ch. xi. num. 2.



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CHAPTER XI.

FAVORS BESTOWED BY SAINT JOSEPH ON SAINT TERESA.

THE love which Saint Teresa bore the spouse of the Mother of Jesus, and her zeal in promoting his glory, was corresponded to by signal benefits. So repeated were they, that he showed them at once common and singular. "So many," says Father Elias de Saint Teresa, cited by the learned Papebroke,* "so many are the benefits, both temporal and spiritual, which our holy mother Saint Teresa received through the intercession of Saint Joseph, that in her alone we have an image of all favors that can be desired.

From her earliest years she began to experience the genial influence of this sun. Read her life, as traced by her own

* PAPEBROKE, *Acta Sanctorum*, March 19, citing FR. ELIAS DE S. TERESA. Embajada de la Iglesia Triunfante a la militante.



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hand, and you will see a grand miracle performed by the holy patriarch, who cured her of a disease that baffled all science. When she began her reform our Lord showed her that she was under the protection of Saint Joseph; hence she commanded the first convent of Avila, where he wished to be perfectly served, to take the name of the holy patriarch, placing the saint and his virgin spouse at the entrance of the house, as its two most faithful guardians.

In erecting this and other monasteries, she experienced the liberality of her father Saint Joseph, who deigned to succor her in such extraordinary ways that they overwhelmed with astonishment all who became aware of the circumstances. The holy patriarch appeared to her at Avila, promising to assist her in erecting the convent; and when his patronage was necessary he fulfilled his promise. I have already said that Saint Joseph cured Saint Teresa of an incurable disorder; but this was not the only time that he miraculously restored her to life. The saint repeated another like favor, delivering from certain death Teresa herself and some of her nuns who were going to found another convent in honor of Saint Joseph. The prodigy happened in this way. The driver having lost the way, drove the vehicle in which they were to the very brink of a precipice, where, but for a miracle, our holy mother and her spiritual daughters would have perished. But in their greatest risk, when on the point of falling, a voice was heard from a lofty rock, bidding the coachman stop and take another road. He obeyed, and when they were out of danger, Saint Teresa looked for the benefactor who had delivered her from imminent peril, in order to thank him for so signal a kindness, and finding no one at all near them, she told her companions with words full of love, gratitude and tenderness: "Daughters, it was my beloved father and master, Saint Joseph, who has delivered

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us from death by withdrawing us from such an evident danger."

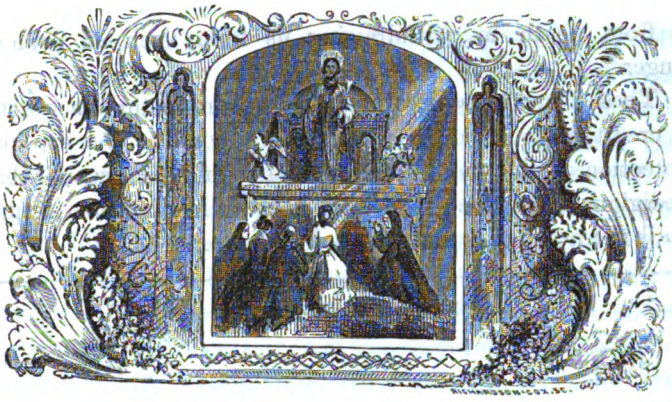
These benefits, with others drawn from historians worthy of credit, as related by Patrignani,* confirm the especial protection of the spouse of the Mother of God towards that prodigious soul, which turned to him as her ordinary refuge in all the necessities and trials of this life.

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* Patrignani, Lib. III. ch. 1.



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CHAPTER XII.

SAINT JOSEPH FAVORS SOULS WHO GIVE THEMSELVES TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE, AND ESPECIALLY TO SUCH AS SEEK UNION WITH GOD IN PRAYER.

SAINT JOSEPH possessed the talent of combining in this world the toils of his office and glorious ministry with the most constant and sublime contemplation, as Saint Athanasius assures us,* and how that he is reaping in heaven the fruit of the glorious actions of his most holy life, he freely grants his aid to souls devoted to the exercise of prayer. Let us come to a particular case, says Father Barré, and we shall behold his patronage in this matter as clear as the light of day. The example offered to our sight in the illustrious soul of Saint Teresa of Jesus,

* Quid aliud Joseph facere posset, quam mente cœlestia meditari. (St. Athanasius, *Sermo de descriptione Mariæ.* Patrignani, Lib. III. ch. iii. § 7.)

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who, under the protection of Saint Joseph, soared like the eagle to the highest contemplation, and induced other souls to imitate her flight, following her counsel and choosing the holy patriarch as a master and protector.

These have not been few; and among those cited by Father Barri, a great spiritual master, are two, who, desirous of devoting themselves to mental prayer, could not succeed in consequence of the difficulties which they encountered: but having chosen Saint Joseph as a director, they suddenly beheld all obstacles overcome, and the once thorny and sterile path thick sowed with heavenly delights. Another person, adds the same author, wishing to be entirely delivered from the distractions which molested him in time of prayer, took the holy patriarch as his advocate, and by his patronage obtained more even than he sought: for he not only obtained the grace of a most elevated prayer, but a deliverance even in dreams, of the least thoughts against purity, being likened by both favors to the most blessed soul of Saint Joseph, of whom the eloquent Chrysostom said,* that his ministry required him to be a spirit free from those disquiets which give rise to importunate thoughts, and those troubles that banish repose and serenity from the heart.

Saint Joseph bestowed, as Father Barri † assures us, the same tranquillity on a nun, who was greatly harassed with temptations in time of prayer and other spiritual exercises, to such a degree that she lost the hopes of attaining that precious liberty which is a kind of pledge and sign of divine love; still, far from giving way entirely to distrust, she recurred to

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* Decebat, illam profecto animam, ab omni esse immunem cogitationum tumultu, quæ tante electa ministra ministerii. (St. Chrysostom, *Hom.* 5. *in Matthæum.*)

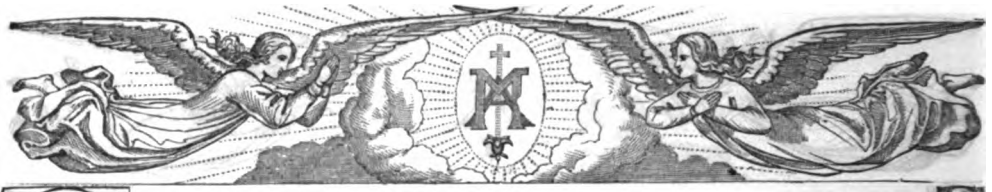
† Father Barri, chapter 2. § 2.

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the mother of the afflicted with the prayer: "My mother and mistress, free me from this storm of troubles which surrounds me; grant me that peace and perfect tranquillity which I need, to converse with my God with a serene and fervent heart. If thou wilt not listen to my humble prayer, vouchsafe to inspire me to address one of those saints most beloved in heaven, whom I may invoke in this anguish that breaks my heart." Scarcely had she concluded her petition when Saint Joseph appeared before the eyes of her understanding, filling her with a torrent of serenity and interior delight, which made her forget the cruel afflictions that had deprived her of all hopes of a close union with her Lord in the holy exercise of prayer.



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CHAPTER XIII.

PATRONAGE OF SAINT JOSEPH OVER SINNERS THAT SEEK TO BE CONVERTED TO GOD.

SAINT JOSEPH, if we must speak with the sublimity which his beneficent influence merits, has by communication the fairest qualities of that heavenly Father who maketh the sun rise upon the good and the bad* to enlighten and cherish both by its rays; for while he favors and assists the just, he does not refuse his mediation to sinners. This equality of his benefits is shown us by wonderful events clearly indicative of the universal and powerful protection of Saint Joseph. The first favor which I shall relate, occurred in Venice, where, according to Isidore Isolanus,† there lived a certain knight, who tarnished a de-

* Matt. v. 45.

† ISOLANUS, De donis S. Josephi, Part IV. ch. x.



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votion of praying daily before a statue of Saint Joseph, by his evil habits of disregarding God's holy laws. This noble Venetian fell sick, and finding that by the seriousness of his malady and his sins he was in danger of losing both lives, he beheld a person enter his room very like the statue before which he was wont to pray. By his sight and presence he saw clearly the hideousness of the sins in which he had so thoughtlessly lived ; and without loss of time he made a contrite confession, and when it was ended he gave up his soul to his Creator at the very moment that the priest ended the words of absolution.

The second favor took place in Father Barri's time, while he was actually writing his work on devotion to the holy patriarch, and he thus relates it. A certain person having broken a vow which he had taken, durst not declare this in the tribunal of penance, overcome by shame at having committed such a sin. He persevered in this unhappy state for some time ; but considering that unless he discovered to his confessor the faults which he had committed, it was impossible to extract the thorn which pierced his heart, and which was a constant torment to his conscience, he determined to implore the patronage of Saint Joseph, hoping from the holy patriarch resolution and means of overcoming the repugnance that sealed his lips as to his sin in violating his vow. To obtain the grace which he desired, he for nine days recited to Saint Joseph the hymn and prayer which are in his office. At the close of this novena he felt so moved and resolved to confess his inveterate fault, that without repugnance he went to his confessor's feet, and manifested the fault so long concealed. Having obtained this grace, he chose the holy patriarch for his guardian, and the better to secure his protection, he always carried his picture about him, even in sleep, to protect him from impure visions in dreams. Saint Joseph did not



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disdain to protect him ; for the same person confessed, that from the day when he put himself under his protection, the favors which he received from his protector were most continual and singular.

The third favor, also related by Father Barri, was the deliverance of two persons strongly tempted to impurity. The intercession of Saint Joseph is singular and powerful to obtain all graces ; but it appears more efficacious and victorious in those straits, and where chastity is imperilled, as that virtue especially was maintained in all its splendor by the saint, amid the austerities wherewith he continually afflicted his virginal body, according to the opinion of the most learned Salmeron.*

The fourth favor, was the glorious triumph wherewith Saint Joseph changed the life of a French soldier. This person was a young man of Lyons, who had long led a most exemplary life, and had even resolved to renounce the world in order to place his salvation out of jeopardy. His parents, however, dissuaded him from this, and he began to give full reins to youthful license, plunging into every debauchery. Like the prodigal son he left his father's house, and taking the uniform and livery of that profession, which, as a poet tells us, is ever at war with piety, he made such a public avowal of vice as to be the scandal even of the troops. His parents beholding their son more a votary of Venus than of Mars, wept over his loss inconsolably. They hoped to gain him by their grief, and sent letters bedewed with their tears, inviting him home, promising him a kind reception if he would leave the army. The letters made no impression on that youth, who was as hard as flint and as deaf as an asp.

* Asperitatem corpori suo adhibebat, sive qua castitas non custoditur. (SALMERON, Tom. III. Tract. 3.)

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Then his parents took another step, and implored the succor of Saint Joseph, whom they fervently implored to receive under his protection this rebellious child, and save him from everlasting ruin. The saint, hearkening to the pious prayer, obtained him such a repentance of his faults, that, changed to a new man, he left the army, and returning home renewed the lost fervor of his virtues. This truly singular benefit was so due to Saint Joseph, that God, under the circumstances of a sinner so plunged in sin, would perhaps not have granted it to the intercession and patronage of any other saint; because the Lord, as Saint Ambrose teaches with other theologians,* keeps the grace of conversion reserved to those saints most signalized by his friendship. Saint Joseph by his merit and authority as spouse of the Mother of God, has no equal at least in this line. Hence we must confess that he will easily obtain pardon of our sins and the grace of conversion to God, which, perhaps, we should not obtain by the prayers of other saints, who have not in heaven the same influence with Jesus and Mary.

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* "Si peccaverit vir in virum, placari ei potest Deus, si autem in Dominum peccaverit vir, quis orabit pro eo? (1. Regum ii. 25.) Præterea non dixit nemo orare poterit, sed *quis orabit pro eo?* Hoc est non quicumque poterit facile pro eo gratiam conversionis et veniam ab eo obtinere, sed ad hoc adhibendus est insignis Dei amicus. Ita S. Ambrosius."—"If any man shall sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf: but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?" (1 Kings II. 25.) God does not say, no one can pray, but who will pray for him? that is, not every one can easily obtain for him the grace of conversion and pardon, but for this is needed a special friend of God. (ANTOINE, Tract. de Pœnitentia, cap. vii.)

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CHAPTER XIV.

BENEFITS SHOWING THE POWERFUL INTERCESSION OF SAINT JOSEPH, WHEN HIS PATRONAGE IS IMPLORED FOR HEALTH OF BODY.

TO him who has power and influence in what is greater, we cannot deny it in what is less. Saint Joseph has shown by the very light of his benefits and the splendor of his dignity, that when invoked by mortals for the good and remedy of their conscience, what would be difficult to other intercessors who are less beloved and powerful in heaven, is easy to his patronage. This being the case, who can doubt but that, his protection extends equally to those graces which, pertaining to the lower order of nature and the body, are less exalted than those which pertain to the greatness of the soul? The more so, as the favors which we read in history, force us to confess that the patronage of the father of Jesus and spouse of the

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Virgin Mary, is universal, and more powerful to obtain and grace, whether for the good of the soul or the help and relief of the body.

To confirm this protection I might relate all the benefits conferred by Saint Joseph in Flanders and France, as related by the Bollandists; but I will omit them, deeming it enough to relate two prodigies, which Saint Joseph wrought when invoked: the one restraining the violence of fire, and the other checking the fury of the sea and its impetuous waves. In the year 1631, when Mount Vesuvius, the well-known volcano near Naples, poured from its bowels, it would seem, the whole mass of fire seething there, a child named Joseph was on the point of perishing, being shut off on one side by the sea, and on the other by the boiling torrent of lava which rolled devastating all before it. The child beheld itself in this danger, left by an aunt who abandoned him in her headlong flight, and having no other means of escaping destruction, she had recourse to the father of Jesus with this prayer: "Saint Joseph, I commend little Joseph to thee: let thy name which he bears defend him." Scarcely had the afflicted woman uttered her fervent prayer, when she suddenly beheld the child out of risk. When asked how he had escaped so great a peril, he smiling replied that Saint Joseph, to whom she had commended him, had at once rescued him from his dangerous position.*

Let us pass from fire to water, and we shall behold another prodigy of Saint Joseph, delivering from death three Franciscans who were shipwrecked in one of the most terrible storms ever known in the North Sea. These religious were for three days tossed about on a plank, when Saint Joseph, to whom they turned as the star and sacred anchor of their hope, in

* Recupitus, *Observationes Vesuvii anni* 1631.

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that storm when the waves ran mountains high, vouchsafed to favor them. They invoked the holy patriarch from the commencement of their affliction; but he, wishing to test the extent of their confidence, in the crisis, deferred his efficacious patronage to the third day, when, in the form of a majestic youth, he appeared on the wave-tossed plank, and saluting them with the affability of a father, infused courage into their oppressed hearts, and strength into their limbs, weakened by the hardships of the preceding days; then acting as their pilot and helmsman, he guided them to the shore. Till then the youth had not revealed himself; but on their asking his name, he replied that he was Saint Joseph, on which the friars returned him most devout and heartfelt thanks for so singular a favor. The saint not only succored them, but also declared to them his seven joys and dolors which he experienced in this life, telling them that those who commemorated him should enjoy his patronage in this life. Saying this he disappeared, leaving them full of consolation and gratitude to that Joseph whom the Almighty led through this world by the path of tribulation and joy.*

On this occasion Saint Joseph acted as a pilot and mariner. In others he appears as a physician healing incurable diseases, now at Lyons, which Patrignani calls the theatre of his wonders, and now at other cities as the Bollandists tell us. Father Barri,* too, relates many favors granted by Saint Joseph to those who invoked his patronage, one of which I shall mention in the very words of this chronicler of the wonders of Saint Joseph. "This miracle," says Barri, "is worthy of being circumstantially related, but I will not do so here, referring the reader to the account published with the approbation of the bishop of Poictiers, who juridically

* Barri, ch. xii.

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examined the miraculous cure. The case was this. Sister Jane, prioress of the Ursulines at Lyons, fell grievously ill with a most acute pain in her breast accompanied with a malignant fever. The disease was, according to the opinion of medical men, incurable. The sick nun accordingly supposed herself in the last moments of her life: and she certainly would have passed to the other life, had not Saint Joseph, her special advocate, appeared with a remedy. While she was prostrated with the vehemence of her pain, the cell was suddenly changed into a paradise by the presence of Saint Joseph, the prince of saints, whom she beheld seated on a luminous cloud, with a countenance more beautiful than the sun, and a superhuman majesty. His age was apparently about forty, his flowing chestnut hair glittered like the stars of the firmament. The saint first regarded the sick nun with gentle eyes breathing heavenly delights, and then approaching the bed, he laid his hand on the side which was the seat of the mortal malady, and anointed it with oil and some other heavenly liquid, by which the prioress was perfectly restored to health as before the attack. The physician, a Calvinist, surprised and beside himself with astonishment, could not utter a word. But at last, unable to remain silent, he declared that it was an extravagant change; but that all was easy to God."

A nun of the convent of Facontin near Antwerp, where there is a magnificent chapel of Saint Joseph, experienced a favor even more extraordinary than the last. This nun, whose name was Isabel, had for three years and three months suffered most agonizing pains from the stone. The physicians, from the symptoms, judging that the stone was too large to be removed by the usual remedies, pronounced her case hopeless. Beholding herself abandoned by the physicians, she sought her remedy of another, placing all her confidence in

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Saint Joseph, who is the universal solace of pain. She had recourse to his protection, performing some devotions to the saint, with such confidence that she did not hesitate to tell the prioress: "Mother, I am convinced that by the favor of Saint Joseph, I shall bring him in my hand the stone which torments me." Meanwhile Sister Isabel's hope and affection increased. On the tenth of June the pain became more violent than ever. The sick nun did not, however, lose the confidence which she entertained of her recovery: on the contrary, kneeling before a statue of Saint Joseph, with all the eloquence of tears she implored his powerful patronage, and while in prayer, without difficulty or pain, she passed a stone of the size of a hen's egg, which, as she promised the prioress, she carried to her in her hand, and then went with the rest of the nuns to thank her heavenly physician. On the third of January following, a juridical examination of the miracle was made, and duly authenticated. The stone, which weighed ten ounces, was hung up at Saint Joseph's altar as a perpetual memorial of so great a miracle. It extorted from a Protestant physician, who among the rest saw it, the following ingenuous admission: "In many points I dissent from the Catholic religion; but considering the narrow channels through which the stone had to pass, and other circumstances, I cannot but consider the cure miraculous." The author who mentions this miracle is Papebroke, the Bollandist, in whose work,* this and other benefits of the Most High granted through the intercession of Saint Joseph will be found. In his patronage, as these writers affirm, the poor find succor, the sterile fecundity, those in travail a happy delivery, mariners and travellers a guide, and pilgrims a

* Acta Sanctorum. *Ad diem* 19 *Martii*, § 10.

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shelter.* The name of Joseph, says Father Barri, is most efficacious against evil spirits that assail the young, and, indeed, as he heard a most holy person declare, almost all-powerful against every kind of evil ones.

Religious orders have found in Saint Joseph's protection in their temporal difficulties succor as prompt as abundant; and as Patrignani remarks, we see an evident testimony of this patronage in the families of Saint Teresa, the convents of the Carmelites. The Carthusians have also experienced the favorable intercession of the holy patriarch, whom they invoked in order to obtain novices for their institute. Those who have lost the goods of fortune find an advocate in Saint Joseph, and Patrignani think thats the Lord has granted that things lost should be found under his protection, for the grief which he suffered when the child Jesus was lost in the temple.

The patronage of Saint Joseph, as his dignity and his repeated benefits in every kind of necessity show, is general, and the most potent in heaven of that of all the saints. By this I do not mean that we shall always obtain the grace we seek. If our memorials are duly made, and our prayer conformable to God's designs as to the interests of our souls, we shall behold our desires perfectly accomplished; but if the favor we seek is not for our good, we shall not obtain it; but by directing our petition to Saint Joseph, the Almighty will do us some favor, different, indeed, from what we sought, but more conducive to our eternal felicity; for as Patrignani says,† Saint Joseph sometimes refuses what is less, because he wishes to grant what is greater. At other times we fail to obtain our petitions, because we, by our ignorance, deprive our

* "The Bollandists," says Tillemont (I. 79.), "relate several miracles, wrought it is believed by God, through St. Joseph's intercession, during the last century."

† PATRIGNANI, Book II. ch. ix. § 7.

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prayers of all their efficacy.* We ask, says Saint Leo,† quiet, rest and solace, when we should ask strength and patience in affliction and hardship. Hence we should know that if the favor we ask of Saint Joseph to obtain for us of his son, the Man-God, does not come down from heaven, it is not from want of power in our intercessor, but from the ignorance or irregularity of our prayer.

Well does the poet say :

> "If we are unheard, tis not that heaven's in fault,
> The fault is ours."‡

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* St. James, iv. 3.

† Inter tentationes hujus vitæ prius nobis tolerantiam postulandam esse quam gloriam. (SAINT LEO, *Serm. de Transfiguratione.*)

‡ Sin minus audimur, non nos oracula fallunt
Divina. In nobis culpa est; obsistimus ipsi
Nobis: Nec petimus, qua par est, mente fideque:
Aut plerumque, etiam stulta et nocitura precamur.
Oranti, ut par est, nunquam Deus obstruit aures.

ABAD, *Heroica de Deo*, v. 55.



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CHAPTER XV.

PROTECTION OF SAINT JOSEPH IN THE AGONIES OF DEATH.



THE world has experienced the powerful patronage of the spouse of the Mother of God in all the necessities to which that misery exposes us, in which we children of the first man are born. The violently afflicted church has breathed and maintained her rights and honors by the protection of so illustrious and victorious a patriarch. Catholicity is preserved amid the nations as blooming as those lilies which spring up and preserve their brilliancy amid the thorns that surround them. Religious orders have found support and remedy from want, in the abundance of his most seasonable succor: * fathers wisdom to direct their families: sovereigns peace at home

* PATRIGNANI, Book II. ch. ix. § 3.

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and victory in war; the sick have seen diseases suddenly cured, which the most searching remedies could not reach; the persecuted have obtained patience, and the just a glorious perseverance; because Saint Joseph is like that luminary that has under the gentle heat of its influence the earth, on which those dwell whom heaven has placed under his care. He protects and succors all, then, amid the calamities which afflict them; but in that formidable moment which has made a Hilarion and a Jerome tremble in the desert, then the holy patriarch seems to add the last efforts to his power, and all the authority of father and spouse to his claims, as though he had reserved his power for that terrible hour, when those are in their agony who have venerated him in life with especial marks of devotion.

This peculiar patronage of Saint Joseph over his clients when about to pass to the next world, we can here confirm with four proofs, which were four proofs of his gratitude and love. These make him more liberal to them who, having chosen him as an advocate, have placed in his intercession their hopes of bliss and solace in trial, especially in that hour which we cannot remember without feeling a torrent of bitterness arise in our memory.

The first benefit we read in the life of Sister Prudentiana of the order of Saint Francis, who, when about to die, received from Saint Joseph in reward of her devotion, the greatest consolation which she could desire at that hour; because he appeared with the Infant Jesus in his arms, whence he passed to the arms of his spouse Prudentiana, who already began in anticipation to enjoy the delights which God reserved for her in heaven.*

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* *Vidas de las personas ilustres en santidad del orden Franciscano.* (Feb. 14.)

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The second is related by Patrignani,* citing Saint Vincent Ferrer, who says that a Valentia merchant had the devout habit of inviting to his table at Christmas in honor of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, a poor old man and a nursing woman with her child. The pious merchant died, and appearing to some who were commending his soul to God, he told them that at the very moment of his departing this life, Jesus, Mary and Joseph came down to visit him, inviting him in these words : "In life thou didst receive us into thy house in the person of three poor persons, for which we now come to receive thee into our home."

The third benefit which we will insert was the descent of Saint Joseph from heaven with Saint Teresa and other saints to assist at the death of Mother Anne of Saint Augustine. A nun residing in another convent witnessed this visit ; while imploring our Lord to prolong Mother Anne's life, she beheld her ascend to heaven between Saint Joseph and Saint Teresa.†

The fourth was a favor in which Saint Joseph showed his patronage for his clients, and his zeal for souls of which he is the universal father and protector. The favored one was an Augustinian friar, who some months after his death appeared to a fellow-religious, telling him that he suffered most terrible torments in purgatory, and had been in danger of condemnation, but that Saint Joseph, who availed much at Christ's tribunal, as his putative father, delivered him from hell for the devotion with which he venerated him in this world.‡

["We should particularly entertain devotion to Saint Joseph," says Saint Alphonsus Liguori, "that he may obtain for

* Patrignani, Lib. II. ch. viii. § 3.

† History of the Discalced Carmelites.

‡ Alloza, *Amor y aficion a San José ;* Garcia, *Compendio de las excelencias de San José.*

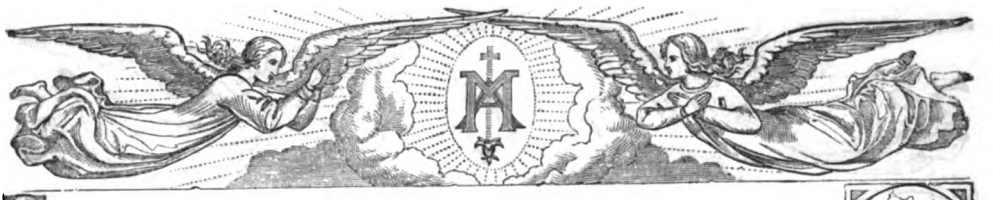
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us a happy death. In return for his saving the Infant Jesus from the snares of Herod, he has the privilege of delivering the dying from the snares of the devil. Besides, in consequence of his having for so many years assisted Jesus and Mary, and provided them by his daily toil, both a home and sustenance, he has the privilege of obtaining for those who honor him a special assistance of Jesus and Mary at the moment of death.

"O my holy protector, Saint Joseph, my sins deserve a bad end: but if thou dost defend me, I cannot be lost. Not only hast thou been a great friend of my Judge, but thou hast been, too, his guardian and foster-father; commend me to thy Jesus, who loves thee so. I place myself under thy protection, receive me as thy servant for evermore. And in the name of the holy society of Jesus and Mary, of which thou didst enjoy the advantages in this life, obtain for me at the moment of my death a special assistance of Jesus and Mary."]



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CHAPTER XVI.

METHODS OF HONORING SAINT JOSEPH GIVEN BY FATHERS BINET AND PATRIGNANI.

THOSE who seek the protection of Saint Joseph, may honor him by these actions of piety. The first will be to have a mass said on the nineteenth of each month, or on the festivals of the holy patriarch. The second, to found, if means permit, a perpetual mass in honor of the holy patriarch, either every day or every month, or at least on the solemnities when the church celebrates his death, his espousals and his patronage. The third to give a dowry to some poor girl to enable her to take a state in life and escape all danger. The fourth is to meditate on his seven joys and dolors. The fifth, to imitate



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him in his silence, his purity, his obedience and conformity to the orders and precepts of heaven ; in his constancy in virtue and all the exercises of piety, in his patience amid persecutions, hardships and insults ; in his humility and in that heroic resignation which he maintained among the Egyptians, while awaiting the order for his return.

The sixth, to divide the week among the seven privileges of Saint Joseph, meditating on one each day. On Sunday we may meditate on him as father of Jesus ; on Monday as spouse of the Virgin Mary : on Tuesday as adorned with virginal purity ; on Wednesday as patriarch, that is, as reputed father of that Jesus who is the head of the elect in the enjoyment of heaven ; on Thursday as treasurer or minister of our redemption and guardian of Christ and his most holy mother ; on Friday as treasurer of the graces of the Almighty ; on Saturday as seated near the throne of the most holy Trinity after Jesus and Mary.

The seventh mode is to seek new clients to revere and honor him, in order to share in the happiness of that preacher of whom Binet tells,* who was assisted and consoled at the hour of death by the Blessed Virgin, because he was accustomed in his sermons to relate some beautiful example in her honor or that of her holy spouse Saint Joseph. The eighth is to keep in our house some picture or statue of the holy patriarch, or at least his medal on our beads, imitating Saint Francis de Sales, the only picture in whose breviary was a picture of Saint Joseph to show his most singular affection and devotion,† or imitating Father Louis Lalemant, that most devout client of Saint Joseph, who asked that a picture

* Binet, Portrait des faveurs divins faits a Saint Joseph, chap xii.
† Patrignani, Lib. III. ch. i. § 5.

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of the saint should be laid on his corpse to accompany him to the grave. The ninth is to meditate on these expressions which Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi uttered in ecstasy: "Oh, how the glorious Saint Joseph participates in the passion of Jesus by the services which he rendered his humanity! The purity of Saint Joseph is regarded in heaven as Mary's, and in the splendor that emanates from both in heaven, Joseph's glory seems to be more brilliant and glorious than Mary's. Joseph between Jesus and Mary is like a refulgent star, holding under his protection all the souls that are ranged under the banner of Mary." *

The tenth is to kneel before a picture of the saint and manifest all our necessities, both corporal and spiritual, in the same manner that we would in the presence of so benign and amiable a protector. The eleventh is to practise those aids to the poor which, as Patrignani tells us, are applauded as triumphs of charity at Florence. The twelfth action is directed to the prelates of the church; of whom Albertus Magnus said that, the father of Jesus and head of the holy family, was the model and example.† The last action will be to place ourselves daily under the protection of Saint Joseph, the head and guardian of the noblest and most illustrious

* Joseph exemplar prælatorum ecclesiæ. (Albertus Magnus, *cap.* i. *in Matth.*)

† "Of the small number of devotions to St. Joseph which have been indulgenced by the Holy See, two are for priests only. The one to be said before Mass, speaks not only of seeing and hearing Jesus, but of carrying Him, kissing Him, clothing Him, and taking care of Him, and then says: "O God, who hast given unto us a royal priesthood, grant that as Blessed Joseph deserved reverently to touch with his hands, and carry Thine Only-Begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary, we too may serve at Thine Altar." And again in the Collect called the "Efficacious prayer," also indulgenced by Pius VII. for priests only, St. Joseph is spoken of as the Keeper of the Virgins Jesus and Mary, and the model of our ministrations to them both. And look at the parallel between St. Joseph and the Catholic priesthood." Faber, (*Blessed Sacrament*, 143.)

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family that the world has ever seen. The power and influence of this great saint is shown in these verses :

Jam cœli Regina jubet, jam regia Conjux
Imperat, es sponsus? Rex ades: * ergo jube
Fidere fas rebus, fas est, sperare salutem
Tanto sub Patre, cui Filius ipse Deus.

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* Nubentem reginæ consequens est, regem esse. (BALDUS, *de rescriptis.*)



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CHAPTER XVII.*

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT JOSEPH, BY SAINT ALPHONSUS MARY LIGUORI.

AMID the innumerable means of salvation that God has put at our disposition, there is one that proves no less than all others the great love that God bears us, and the great desire which he has for our salvation : it is devotion to the saints. God wishes that they, as his friends, should intercede for us, and obtain for us by their merits and prayers the graces which we do not merit of ourselves. And if it is so, it is not that the merits of Christ are not more than superabundant to enrich us with all good, but because he thereby wishes to honor his faithful servants by admitting them to co-operate in our salvation ; and on the other hand he wishes to inspire us with a

* Supplemental.

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greater confidence of obtaining graces by the intervention of the saints. Now among all the saints, who but knows that, after the Divine Mother, Saint Joseph has great credit and great power with God to obtain grace for those who honor him. This we shall see in the two following points:

I. How we should honor Saint Joseph on account of his dignity.

II. How we should confide in Saint Joseph's protection on account of his sanctity.

I. Who can doubt that it is a duty on our part to honor Saint Joseph after the Son of God himself deigned to honor him with the name of Father?* And surely the evangelists unhesitatingly give him the title: "His father and mother were wondering at these things which were spoken concerning him."† It is, too, the name which the Divine Mother gave him: "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."‡ Now if the King of kings has wished to raise Saint Joseph to so high an honor, it is most proper and just that we should seek to honor him as much as we can.§ What angel, or what saint, says Saint Basil, ever merited to be called the father of the Son of God?‖ We may, then, well apply to Saint Joseph what Saint Paul says, that he has received a more excellent name than theirs.¶ By this name of father

* "Josephum parentis honore coluit Christus."—"Christ honored Saint Joseph as a father." (ORIGEN, Hom. 17, in Luc. xi.)

† Luke ii. 33.

‡ Luke ii. 48.

§ "Ab hominibus valde honorandus quem Rex regum sic voluit extollere."—"Much is he to be honored by men whom the King of kings has thus chosen to exalt." (CARDINAL OF CAMBRAY, *Tract. de S. Josepho.*)

‖ Nomine Patris neque angelus, neque sanctus meruit appellari; hoc unus Joseph potuit nuncupari.—"By the name of father, no angel, no saint merited to be styled; Joseph alone could be so called."

¶ Being made so much better than the angels, as he had inherited a more excellent name than they. (Hebrews i. 4.)

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Joseph has been more honored of God than all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and pontiffs ; they all bear the name of servants, Joseph that of father.

Now behold Joseph, as father, constituted head of this little family, little in number, but great in the two great persons that it contained, namely the Mother of God and the only Son of God made man.* In that house Joseph commands, and the Son of God obeys.† This subjection of Christ, says Gerson, by proving to us the Saviour's humility, shows us the great dignity of Saint Joseph.‡ "And what greater dignity, what greater elevation, says the same author, can there be than to command him who commands all kings ?" §

Josue filled the whole world with admiration, when he commanded the sun to stand still, in order to give him time to accomplish the overthrow of his enemies, and the sun obeyed his voice.‖ But what parallel can we draw between Josue who sees himself obeyed by the sun, an inanimate creature, and Joseph who sees himself obeyed by the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, the Son of God ? As long as Joseph lived, that is for twenty-five years, Jesus respected him as a father, so that, during these twenty-five years it was our Saviour's continual occupation to obey Saint Joseph. During all that time it was the part of Joseph to command as head

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* "He made him (Joseph) master of his house." (Psalm civ. 21.)

† "And he was subject to them." (Luke ii. 51.)

‡ "Et erat subditus illis : quæ subjectio sicut notat humilitatem in Christo, ita dignitatem in Josepho."—"*And he was subject to them :* a subjection, which as it denotes humility in Christ, denotes dignity in Saint Joseph." (Gerson, *Serm. de Nativit.*)

§ Quid sublimius quam imperare ei qui in femore habet scriptum : Rex regum et Dominus dominantium ?—"What more sublime than to command him who hath written on his thigh : King of kings, and Lord of lords ?"

‖ The Lord obeying the voice of a man. (Josue x. 14.)

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of that family, and the part of Christ to obey, as subordinate to Joseph, whom God had given instead of a father. Thus all the actions of Christ, his movements, his nourishment, his repose were all regulated by the orders of Joseph, and moreover Jesus was most attentive to hear and execute what Joseph commanded. According to the revelation which Saint Bridget had, the Son of God was so obedient, that when Joseph said to him: "Do this," or "do that," he did it immediately.* And Gerson represents Jesus to us, sometimes preparing their meals, sometimes washing the dishes, sometimes going to the well for water, sometimes sweeping the house.† According to Saint Bernard, God did not choose Saint Joseph merely to be the consoler of his Mother, who had so many tribulations on earth; he did not choose him merely to be the foster-father of Christ; but he also wished him to be in some sort his co-operator in the redemption of the world, which was the work of the great council of the three divine persons.‡ Consequently, wishing him to hold the place of a father to his Son, he confided to him the care of bringing him up and protecting him against the snares of his enemies. "Take the child," § as if addressing him in the words of the psalm: "To thee is the poor man left." ‖ Yes, Joseph, I have sent my Son upon earth, and I have sent

* Sic Filius meus obediens erat ut cum Joseph diceret: Fac hoc, vel illud, statim ille faciebat. (St. Bridget, *Revel.* Lib. VI. ch. 68.)

† Sæpe cibum et potum parat, vasa lavat, bajulat undam de fonte, nunc que domum scopit. (Gerson, *In Joseph.* Distinct. 3.)

‡ "Fidelis servus et prudens, quem constituit Dominus suæ matris solatium, suæ carnis nutritium, solum denique in terris magni consilii coadjutorem fidelissimum."—"The faithful and prudent servant whom our Lord constituted His mother's solace, the nourisher of Himself, in fine the sole most faithful coadjutor of the Great Council on earth. (St Bernard, *Hom. II. super* Missus est.)

§ Matt. ii. 13.

‖ Psalm x. (pt. 2) 14.

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him poor, humble, without the pomp of wealth or external dignity: he shall therefore be despised in the world and styled "a carpenter's son," * according to the humble calling that thou dost follow. I have wished thee to be poor, because I wished thee to hold the place of father to my Son, poor like thyself; for he has not come into the world to rule, but to save men by his sufferings and death. Thou shalt be on earth his guardian and his father in my stead: to thee has been left the care of the poor: I resign him into thy hands. He shall be persecuted, and thou shalt share his persecuted lot; watch over him, and be faithful to me.

In consequence, God, says Saint John Damascenus, gave Joseph a father's love, a father's watchful care, and a father's authority.† He gave him a father's affection, that he might watch with great tenderness over Jesus; he gave him a father's solicitude, that he might see all possible precautions around him: and finally a father's authority, to give him the assurance that he should be obeyed in all the measures that he might take touching the person of his Son.

Having, moreover, admitted him to be the co-operator in the work of redemption, as Saint Bernard says, he wished him to be present at the birth of Jesus Christ; and that so that he might afterwards be a faithful witness of the glory rendered to God by the angels at the birth of his Son, and of the account given by the shepherds when they came to adore our Saviour: God wished him also to witness the arrival of the Wise Men who, guided by the star, came from distant lands to adore the holy child, as they themselves declared: "We have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him."‡

* Is not this the carpenter's son? (Matt. xiii. 3.)

† Dedit ei affectum, solicitudinem, auctoritatem patris.

‡ Matt. ii. 2.

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Then the Almighty seeing that jealous Herod, fearful for his royalty, sought to slay the divine child, sent an angel to Joseph to bid him take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt.* And behold, Joseph, faithful and docile to the voice of God, rising by night, and even as interpreters of Holy Writ maintain, the very night that he received the angel's warning, took the child and Mary his mother, and set out for the land of Egypt. Joseph, without losing time, took as many of the tools of his trade as he could carry, foreseeing that he must depend on them in Egypt for the support of his poor family. Mary took in her arms her child with the scanty clothing that was to serve her son, and both set out unattended, like poor pilgrims, to perform that long and perilous journey, having to cross vast deserts before reaching Egypt; without any hope of finding friends or kinsmen there, but only a barbarous and unknown nation. In this country, Joseph, in pursuance of another warning of the angel, who said to him: "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel," † Joseph, I say, immediately departed from Egypt and returned to Judea: but there, warned anew by the angel, he did not abide in Judea for fear of Archelaus, who reigned instead of Herod, his father: he proceeded to Nazareth in Galilee, where he dwelt till his death in the company of his beloved Jesus, continuing to lead a life of poverty in his humble calling.

In this interval it happened, that having gone with Mary and Jesus, then a child of twelve years of age, to visit the temple of Jerusalem, as he was returning home, he came up

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* Arise, and take the Child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I tell thee; for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him. (Matt. ii. 13.)

† Matt. ii. 20.

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to Mary, whom he supposed to be attended by her Son, and found that Jesus was not there; for three days Joseph did nothing but mourn over the absence of Jesus, the only love of his heart. But what afflicted him most was the fear that Jesus might have left him for some offence that he had given, and that the divine child deemed him no longer worthy of preserving so great a treasure, as Lanspergius somewhere tells us.* But he was afterwards consoled by learning from Jesus himself that he had remained in the temple engaged in his Father's glory. From that time till his death Joseph continued to lavish his care on Jesus; and then he had the bliss of terminating his life in the arms of Mary and Jesus, who assisted him at that last moment. Hence Saint Francis de Sales says, that he must hold it as certain that Joseph died of love like his Virgin spouse.

II. We ought to have great confidence in the protection of Saint Joseph, because he has been extremely dear to God on account of his sanctity. To estimate Saint Joseph's sanctity it is sufficient to know that he was chosen by God to discharge the duties of a father to Jesus Christ. Now Saint Paul tells us: that God "hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament,"† which means, according to Saint Thomas, that whenever God chooses any one for a particular ministry, he gives him all the graces necessary to fit him to fulfil it. God having then destined Saint Joseph to exercise a father's authority over the Incarnate Word, we must hold for certain that he conferred upon him all the gifts of wisdom and

* Tristabatur ex humilitate, quia arbitrabatur se indignum cui tam pretiosus commissus esset thesaurus. He was saddened from humility, because he deemed himself unworthy of having so precious a treasure committed to his care.

† II. Cor. iii. 6.

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sanctity which suited so sublime an office. We cannot then doubt but that he enriched him with all the graces and privileges accorded to other Saints. Gerson and Suarez say that Saint Joseph had three special privileges not granted to other saints. The first was that of being sanctified in his mother's womb like Jeremias and Saint John the Baptist. The second was that of being at the same time confirmed in grace. The third that of being ever exempt from the movements of concupiscence: a privilege which Saint Joseph by the merits of his purity may communicate to those who honor him by delivering them from carnal appetites.

Joseph in the Gospel is called JUST.* Now what does the word just mean? According to Saint Peter Chrysologus, it means a perfect man who possesses all virtues; † so that Saint Joseph was already holy before his marriage, but he made still greater progress in sanctity after his marriage with the Blessed Virgin. The example of his holy spouse alone was enough to sanctify him. But if Mary, as Saint Bernardine of Siena says, is the dispensatrix of all the graces that God grants to men, with what profusion must we not believe that Mary enriched her spouse, whom she loved so well and by whom in return she was so beloved. How much more must we not believe that Joseph's sanctity increased by the continual company and familiarity of Jesus all the time that they lived together? If the two disciples who were going to Emmaus felt their hearts inflamed with divine love in the few moments that they enjoyed our Saviour's company

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* Matt. i. 19.

† Joseph vocari justum attendite, propter omnium virtutum perfectam possessionem. Observe that Joseph is called a just man from his perfect possession of all virtues.

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and heard him speak,* what ardent flames of holy charity must not have been enkindled in Joseph's heart while conversing for twenty-five years with Jesus, hearing the words of eternal life that fell daily from his lips, and observing the wonderful examples of humility, patience, and obedience which he gave, showing such readiness to aid him in his toil, and serve in any thing required in the domestic affairs of the house? What a conflagration of divine love must have been kindled in the heart of Joseph by all these darts of divine love: in that heart so detached from all earthly affection? It is true that he also loved greatly his spouse Mary, but that love for Mary did not divide his heart, according to the expression of the apostle, who says that the married man has his heart divided.† No, Joseph's heart was not divided, because the love which he bore his spouse filled him more and more with divine love. Thus, beyond all doubt, Joseph while he lived with Jesus, increased his merits and sanctity to such a point, that we may well say that he surpassed the merits of all the other saints.

This laid down, as the Apostle tells us that Christ will reward each one in the other life according to his merits,‡ what glory consequently may we not suppose that he has prepared for Saint Joseph, who has rendered him so many services, and by whom he was so much beloved while he lived on earth? On the last day, Our Saviour will say to the elect; "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was a stranger, and you took me in; I was naked, and you covered

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* Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way. (Luke xxiv. 32.)

† But he that is with a wife is solicitous . . . how he may please his wife; and is divided. (1 Cor. vii. 33.)

‡ He will render to every one according to his works. (Rom. ii. 6.)



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me." * Yet these did not really feed, shelter and cover Christ in person, but only in the person of the poor, while Saint Joseph afforded food, a home and clothing to Jesus Christ himself. Moreover our Lord has promised a reward to him who gives a cup of water to the poor in his name.† Now what will be the reward of Joseph who can say to Jesus: Not only did I provide thee with food and lodging and clothing, but I saved thee from death by delivering thee from the hands of Herod. Now all this should serve to increase our confidence in the protection of Saint Joseph, and persuade us that God in consideration of the merits of Saint Joseph, will never refuse his foster-father a favor that he asks in favor of those who honor him.

Saint Bernardine goes even further and does not hesitate to say: "Beyond all doubt Jesus in heaven not only does not refuse Saint Joseph those marks of familiarity and respect, which he gave him during life as a son to a father, but he crowns it by new regard." ‡ Observe the words, *familiarity and respect!* That same Lord who on earth honored Saint Joseph as a father will surely refuse him nothing that he asks in heaven. To which we must add that if Joseph on earth had no authority over Christ's humanity as his natural father, he had nevertheless, at least in a certain manner as spouse of Mary, who as our Saviour's natural mother had authority over him. He who has dominion over the tree has too over the fruit which it bears. It follows that Jesus on earth respected Joseph, and obeyed him as his

* Matt. xxv. 35.

† Whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in my name .... he shall not lose his reward. (Mark ix. 40.)

‡ Dubitandum non est, quod Christus familiaritatem et reverentiam quam exhibuit illi cum viveret, tanquam filius patri suo, in cœlis utique non negavit, sed potius complevit. (*Sermo de S. Josepho.*)

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superior, and it follows too that now in heaven, the prayers of Saint Joseph are regarded by Christ as commands. This is Gerson's thought: "When a father, says he, entreats his son, his prayer is a real command." *

Let us now hear what Saint Bernard says of the power which Saint Joseph exercises in distributing graces to those who put their confidence in him." There are Saints who have the power of protecting us in certain circumstances; but it has been granted to Saint Joseph to succor us in every kind of necessity and defend all who fly to him with sentiments of piety." † Now what Saint Bernard said to express his manner of regarding it, Saint Teresa has confirmed by her own experience, saying: "It seems that God has granted to other Saints to aid us only in certain necessities: but we find by experience that Saint Joseph can aid us in all." Nor can we doubt it, since as Christ chose to be subject to Joseph on earth, so he does in heaven all that that Saint asks. Let us imagine then that the Lord seeing us in pain, says to us the words which Pharao addressed to the people at the time of that great famine which desolated the land of Egypt: "Go to Joseph," ‡ Go to Joseph, if you would be consoled. By the grace of God there is now in the world no Christian who does not feel some devotion to Saint Joseph; but among all others, those certainly receive most graces who invoke him most frequently and most confidently. Let us then not fail every day, and several times a day, to commend ourselves to Saint Joseph, who, next to Our Lady, is the most powerful with God of all the Saints. Let us never fail

* Dum pater orat natum, velut imperium reputatur. (GERSON, *de S. Josepho.*)

† Quibusdam Sanctis datum est in aliquibus patrocinari, at Sancto Josepho in omni necessitate concessum est opitulari et omnes ad se pie confugientes defendere.

‡ Genesis xli. 45.

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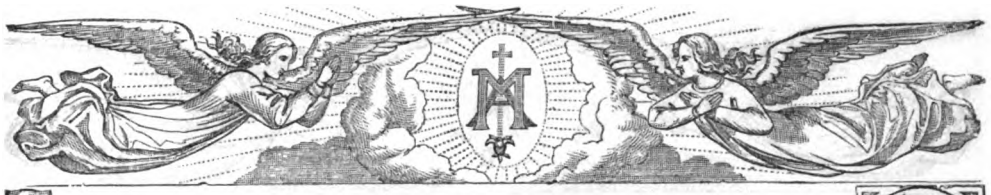
to address him some particular prayer, and more especially in his novena let us multiply our prayers, and fast on the eve of his feast. Let us ask him for graces and he will obtain all that will be useful for our souls. Above all do I exhort you to ask of him three special graces, pardon for sin, love of Jesus, and a happy death. As to pardon for sin, I have this to say: when Christ lived on earth in the house of Joseph, had a sinner desired to obtain of Our Lord pardon for his sins, could he have found a surer way of being heard than Joseph's intercession? If then we wish to be pardoned by God, let us have recourse to Saint Joseph, who is more beloved by Christ in heaven now than he was on earth. Let us moreover ask of Saint Joseph love of Jesus, for I am assured that the most signal grace which Saint Joseph can obtain for those who honor him, is a tender love for the Incarnate Word, in reward for the affection which Joseph had for Jesus in this world. Moreover let us ask of him a happy death; it is a thing known to all, that Saint Joseph is the protector of a happy death, since he had the happiness of dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Those then who have confidence in him should hope that Saint Joseph at the moment of their death will come to assist them accompanied by Jesus and Mary.







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APPENDIX.







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CHAPTER I.

DEVOTION TO THE HOLY FAMILY.

NOTHING is more admirable than the manner in which various devotions are developed in the Church according to the wants of succeeding ages, in order to revive the faith of Catholics when dogmas or practices are attacked by the hydra of error. Thus did devotion to the Blessed Sacrament arise when the Real Presence was assailed; thus did devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus come to warm the hearts that had grown cold in their love of Jesus in his sacrament; thus did the devotion to Saint Joseph come to be a model to the family and to the cloister; and thus has each succeeding age, since the great apostasy of northern Europe, seen the Church surround the hallowed name of Mary with new devotions and new honors, till the devotion of the ages of faith and chivalry to our blessed Mother, seems cold and indifferent to that which now burns in the hearts of the faithful.

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Devotions differ in the form but not in the object. They vary like the flowers placed upon the altar, each clime and each season giving its own with their thousand radiant hues, and thousand rich perfumes, rendering for their time their homage to God and his Saints. The bud and blossom are found there alike, and so with devotions we find the full expanded flower, and the bud of yet unsystematized devotion. Such a bud is devotion to the Holy Family, a devotion familiar to the ear and dear to the heart of every Catholic: a devotion which prompts the motto of his letters, the ejaculations of his heart, the murmur of his lips, and yet a devotion that has never attained in the universal Church a feast, a votive Mass, few practices of devotion, only two indulgenced prayers, and those merely ejaculations.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, devotion of Bethlehem and Nazareth, of Egyptian exile in which the holy three are considered not separately, but united as they were on earth, and reign in heaven, the living image of the Trinity! Beautifully does Gerson exclaim: "Would that I could find words to explain the admirable and venerable Trinity of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph." * "This sacred Trinity," says Charbonnel, "that Heaven has given to earth as a living image of the invisible, eternal and alone adorable Trinity, is entitled next to God to the first fruit of our homage, gratitude, confidence and love." †

Model of Christian households, the Holy Family of Nazareth could not but become an object of devotion, when domestic virtue began to decline, when in these sad days strife, contention, vanity and extravagance alone seem to rule in

* Cuperem mihi verba suppeterent ad explicandam tam admirandam, venerandamque Trinitatem, Jesu, Mariæ et Joseph. (Gerson, *Sermo in Nativit. V. M. Consid.* 4.)

† *Devotion à la Sainte Famille*, 18.

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Christian families. Not without its own ends has Providence so miraculously preserved the Santa Casa, and borne it from land to land the silent apostle of the virtues that had made it the holiest dwelling on earth. How many a holy prelate, how many a devoted missionary has, when a pilgrim at that shrine, been filled with power to sanctify the Christian family, and make it Christian indeed! how many a one has there learned and been gifted to inspire others with devotion to the Holy Family!

In these later ages the sanctity of the marriage too is invaded by civil laws, seeking to degrade to a bond as slight as that of the hireling and his master that union which Our Redeemer compared to his own union with the Church. Unparalleled dissolution of manners follows, conjugal infidelity prevails, polygamy rears its loathsome head. Woman strives to assume a position different from that which God and the Church assign her; she seeks to leave her proper sphere, and mingle in the busy life of man! And worse than all, behold children—where is their respect, their obedience, their devoted love for their parents? The crime with which the Apostle of the Gentiles reproached the nations, whose ignorance of the truth might be some excuse, is now the shame of Christians. Disobedience of their parents, disregard of their authority, contempt of all that is dearest in the sacred ties, shock the faithful pastor at every step, and lead, he knows too well, to the loss of faith and salvation. With the inspired son of Sirach he must ever cry: "Honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother . . . and make a return to them, as they have done for thee." *

The Christian family has lost its fervor, its original virtues, and it is only by studying the model shown them on

* Ecclus. vii. 29.

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the mountain, on the rugged hill-side of Nazareth, in the humble house of Joseph, in the example of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that husband and wife, parent and child, can learn the true spirit of their vocation, the true path which God opens before them. This model should be ever before their eyes, ever the object of their meditation, study, and devout imitation. How many a lesson will not Jesus teach of obedience, alacrity, devotedness, care and sympathy: how many a lesson may we not learn from Mary, in economy, modesty, charity, devotion to the duties of her state; what a picture does not Joséph hold up of docility to God, assiduity in toil, charity unblemished, wisdom in the direction of his household, and in the performance of all the duties of a father! What recollectedness, prayer, retirement, disengagement from worldly things do they not all inspire!

"Consider," says Saint Bonaventure, "consider this little family blessed above all others, but practising most sublime poverty, leading a most holy life. Happy Joseph gained what he could by his joiner's trade; our Lady plied the needle and distaff. She did too the many duties of the house, she prepared food for her husband and son, and did whatever else was needed, for she had no servant. . . . Behold them too eating their daily meal at their little table, taking not exquisite and highly dressed viands, but poor and modest food. See too how they converse, not empty, idle words, but words full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost; no less refreshing soul than body. See how, after a slight recreation, they turn to prayer in their chambers, for their house was not ample but small." *

* Considera illam super omnes alias benedictam familiam, parvam, sed valde excelsam paupertatem et humilem vitam ducentem. Felix Joseph senex quærebat quod poterat de arte lignaminis; Domina vero acu et colo pretio laborabat. Fa-

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It is no wonder then that pious souls have made this Holy Family an object of special devotion, and that many have inculcated it ; for if the perfection of religion is to imitate what we adore and honor,* the object proposed for our imitation must be also the object of our veneration. Yet the devotion took no definite form, but its history is like that of the Holy Family itself, interior, not outward, hidden, not proclaimed. Loretto was its sanctuary, yet it developed in France, but attained its maturest form, not under the warm sky of Italy, nor the sunny glades of France, but in wild and icy Canada, as though destined by the Almighty to produce its effect in our republic, where the family ties sit more loosely, where divorces and immoral creeds have done so much to destroy that Christian idea which the Church had been inculcating for centuries, and had made at last an instinct in the heart of all Christians.

In the middle of the seventeenth century a devotion arose in France, which seems to have been the first defined homage of the Catholic heart to the Holy Family. Persons devout to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, began to wear a cord with thirty knots and three loops to represent the union of thought, sentiment and affection, which pervaded the Holy Family during that number of years. †

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ciebat et alia domus obsequia, quæ multa sunt, ut melius nosti; parabat victum sponso et filio, et alia expedientia faciebat, non enim habebat servientem. . . . Conspice etiam qualiter ipsi tres simul comedunt ad unam mensulam per singulos dies, non lautas et exquisitas, sed pauperes et sobrias cœnas sumentes, et qualiter postea colloquuntur, non inania et otiosa verba, sed plena sapientia et Spiritu Sancto : nec minus mente reficiuntur quam corpore. Sed qualiter post aliqualem recreationem adorationem se convertunt in cubilibus suis, non enim erat eis domus ampla sed parva. (Saint Bonaventure, *Meditationes Vitæ Christi, cap.* xv.)

* Summa religionis est imitari quod colimus.

† *Vie du père Pierre Marie Joseph Chaumonot écrite par lui même.* MSS.

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Devotion to the Holy Family seems to have accompanied the first French settlers to Canada. Jesuit, Sulpitian, and the secular clergy, alike claim the honor of planting and extending it, so universal has it become, and so dear to the heart of all Catholics there. Father Pijart is said to have first formed the plan of giving the devotion a regular form.* But there was then among the Jesuit missionaries of Canada, another whom God had often honored with supernatural favors, one whose life, spent amid the Indians of the lakes with the holiest martyrs of the faith, Jogues and Brebeuf, Daniel and Garnier, had been preserved as though by a miracle. Father Chaumonot had been educated in Italy, and being cured of a terrible disease at Loretto, his heart burned with devotion to the Holy Family. In their honor he had erected amid the Canadian snows a new Loretto, modelled on the Santa Casa, which it reproduced in every dimension, and he had himself adopted the names of both Joseph and Mary. This servant of God had been reserved by Providence to give to the devotion to the Holy Family a definite form. Sent by his superiors to Montreal in 1663, he felt inspired to form a sodality in honor of the Holy Family, in order to sanctify Christian families by an imitation of the virtues practised at Nazareth, and the Almighty inspired with the same thought Madame d'Ailleboust, a pious and devoted lady. The religious communities of Montreal, or Mary city, as the Sulpitians love to call it, entered into the project with zeal. The Sulpitians dedicated to Our Lord, the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady, and the Hospital Nuns of St. Joseph, already in a manner formed an association in honor of Jesus, Mary and

* Faillon, *Vie de M lle. Mance, I.* 234. Vie du père Chaumonot. *Lasolide Devotion à la très Ste Famille.* Quebec, 1855. *La solide Devotion à la très Ste Famille.* Montreal, 1855.

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Joseph; and when Father Chaumonot had drawn up the sketch of the association, the heads of all the communities signed it, and sought to extend the sodality. Many of the faithful eagerly presented themselves to be enrolled, and the miraculous escape from the hands of the Indians of one of its first associates filled all with confidence.

On his return to Quebec, Father Chaumonot proposed the plan of the new association to Monseigneur de Laval, the first Bishop of Quebec, who at once warmly entered into the project, and approved it by his mandate of March 14th, 1665. Already edified by the devotion to the Holy Family which he had found in Canada, this pious prelate had conceived the idea of establishing the feast, and about this time chose four theologians, M. Louis Ange des Maizerets, M. Henri de Bernieres, and the Jesuit Fathers Martin Bouvart and Claude Dablon, to compose the office, a task which, aided by the poet Santeuil, they accomplished. The second Sunday after Epiphany was named for its celebration, and it was solemnized for the first time in 1655; since which time it has remained one of the peculiar feasts of Canada, though now celebrated on the third Sunday after Easter, on which day the holy Bishop fixed it, by his mandate of the fourth of November, 1684.

Meanwhile he had applied to the Holy See for a confirmation of the sodality, and Pope Alexander VII., on the 28th of January, 1665, solemnly approved it, granting numerous indulgences to the members. Succeeding Pontiffs confirmed and extended this grant; and the late Pope Gregory XVI. extended it to all other confraternities of the Holy Family in the diocese of Quebec.

These confraternities have continued: that at Montreal, instituted soon after that at Quebec, lasted for a time, but gave place to one of Saint Anne, on which Pope Clement

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XII. bestowed his approval and a grant of indulgences, but which has as its patronal feast that of the Holy Family.

The devotion thus instituted soon extended, and the pious Bishop distributed on all sides pictures of the Holy Family, and a little treatise which he drew up for the use of the Associates. Besides this, he established in his Cathedral a chapel of the Holy Family, and parishes under the same title rose in various parts, from Isle Orleans to Cahokia on the banks of the Mississippi.*

The devotion thus founded, thus encouraged by so holy a prelate, spread over Canada and the adjoining territories, then belonging to the crown of France, and has continued in Canada to our day, realizing the design of the pious founders,

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* Faillon, *Vie de Mlle. Mance*, *I.* 241.

Francis de Laval, first Bishop of Quebec, and so remarkable for his devotion to the Holy Family, was born in 1663, and was one of the first clergymen formed by the Seminary of the Foreign Missions at Paris. He was appointed Bishop of Petrea, and Vicar Apostolic of Canada in 1658, and twelve years after Bishop of Quebec. His life was one of great sanctity, tried much by the opposition of the colonial authorities to his plans for the good of his diocese. Resigning his see in 1634, he retired to the Seminary of Quebec, where he died most piously. Peter Mary Joseph Chaumonot was born in 1611, near Chatillon sur Seine, where his father was a vine-dresser. While at his studies, a wicked schoolmate induced him to rob his uncle and run away. Fearing to return, he went to Rome, and after many adventures, entered the Society of Jesus in 1632. Here he made great progress in sanctity, and soliciting the Canadian mission, was sent to America in 1639. After this he was to his last hour almost constantly with the Huron Indians, having left them only for a mission to Onondaga, and the memorable visit to Montreal. He founded Loretto and the Confraternity of the Holy Family, as well as the Huron Mission at Quebec, and died on the 21st of February 1693, in the odor of sanctity. (Shea's *Catholic Missions among the Indian Tribes*, 198.) His devotion to the Holy Family was not unrewarded. "Some hours before he expired," says Father Dablon in the circular letter announcing his death, "he suddenly assumed a smiling countenance serener than usual. He sat up, stretched out his arms and hands, and seemed to embrace some persons dear to him, and with eyes fixed on the foot of his bed, he cried out, 'Jesus, Mary, Joseph.' From that moment he continued with more fervor than ever to elicit acts of virtue, especially love of God."

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"to inspire all Christian families with a true and solid piety, as in the designs of God they should serve for the conversion of the unbelievers by the example of an irreproachable life."

Long after this, and in our own day, another confraternity of the Holy Family arose in Belgium, founded at Liege in Belgium in 1844, whence it spread to France, England, and other countries of Europe, extending even to America. Like that in Canada it has received the approbation of the Holy See, and been enriched with indulgences. Its object is also the same in many respects, although while it proposes to honor the Holy Family, it seeks to give especially to the working classes many helps for the salvation of their souls.*

Nor is this devotion confined to Confraternities. The very next year after the establishment of the Congregation of the Holy Family at Montreal, the Hospital Sisters of Saint Joseph at La Rochelle, of the institute founded at Bourdeaux, in 1638, by the pious Mary Delpech de l'Estang, were filled with the spirit of the devotion to the Holy Family, bound themselves by vows, and assumed the name of Sisters of the Created Trinity, placing themselves under the protection of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and with a thought not less full of poetry than of piety, adopted a dress in honor of the three members of the Holy Family,—the violet habit recalled Joseph's humility; the purple scapular the robe thrown around the shoulders of Our Lord in mockery; while the mantle of heavenly blue showed their subjection to the Queen of Angels. The nuncio in France, Cardinal Chigi, approved the change, and the order subsisted till the French Revolution.†

But if they were scattered then other orders of the Holy

* For further particulars as to these Sodalities, see *La Solide Devotion à la Sainte Famille*, Quebec, 1855,—*Book of the Confraternity of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.* London, Richardson, 1854.

† HELYOT, *Histoire des Ordres Religieux.*

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Family arose. In 1801 Besançon became the cradle of a new community, the Sisters of the Holy Family, founded by Madame Jacoulet, who, with the holy Jesuit Father Varin, drew up a rule under which the Sisters have continued to extend, and sanctifying themselves hallow with works of mercy the dioceses of Besançon and Amiens.* Soon after another institute of the same name, similarly consecrated to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, was founded at Villefranche de Rouergue by Mary Emily Guillemette Rodat, who died on the 19th of September, 1852, after endearing her name to all as the foundress and first superior of a most devoted community.†

Brothers of the Holy Family next appeared, and they are laboring even in our own land in the lake-gemmed uplands of Minnesota; and Guilds of the Holy Family also attest the manner in which the devotion is extending.

Besides the encouragement which the Holy See has given to the devotion by the approval of the two confraternities, it has also incited the faithful throughout the world to honor the mysteries of the Holy Family, by the liberal indulgences which it has accorded to the pronouncing of their holy names,‡ and still more to the use of that ejaculatory prayer now so familiar to every Catholic ear and every Catholic heart:

"JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH, I give you my heart and my life.
"JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH, assist me in my last agony.
"JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH, may my soul depart this life in your company."§

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* Guidée *Vie du père Varin*, p. 109. Madame Jacoulet died in 1836.

† Her life has been written by Leon Aubineau.

‡ Jesus, Mary, Joseph, 25 days' indulgence, and 25 more for bowing the head at these holy names. (BOUVIER.)

§ "Cor meum et vitam meam vobis trado, Jesu, Maria et Joseph.
"In agone ultimo, adeste mihi, Jesu, Maria et Joseph.
"In pace anima mea vobis e vita migret comitantibus, Jesu, Maria et Joseph."
Pius VII., on the 28th of April, 1817, granted 300 days' indulgence to the re-

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Among the practices by which we may honor the Holy Family, besides the cord which we have mentioned and the chaplet, neither of which has received any formal approbation, we may apply ourselves to celebrate with especial fervor those feasts in which the mysteries of the Holy Family are celebrated. The Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, Circumcision of Our Lord, Epiphany, the Purification, and the death of Saint Joseph, are the great holydays of the Holy Family, inasmuch as the three sacred persons composing the Holy Family appear in the mysteries commemorated on those days.* Making almost the circuit of the year, they will enable to consecrate it entirely to the Holy Family, or beginning with the Nativity and closing with the feast of Saint Joseph, we may make our devotion a spiritual retreat for the commencement of each year.

We may now examine briefly what advantages are to be derived from this devotion. The clients of the Holy Family have been enriched with so great temporal and spiritual graces that we might enumerate many. Two will here suffice, taken from the annals of the Canadian missions. One of the first associates of the Association at Quebec was a poor but pious woman, living at some distance from the chapel where the exercises of the sodality were performed each morning. Her children were young, and she rose early, prepared all for their morning meal, and, commending them to the care of the Blessed Virgin, hastened to the church. On her return several times she found the door locked, but her little ones dressed, and each eating her little portion. The eldest, just

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citation of these three ejaculations, and a hundred days to the recitation of each separately.

* CHARBONNEL, *Devotion à la Sainte Famille.*

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able to talk, told the astonished mother that a beautiful Lady had washed them, and given each her breakfast. The good woman took her little girl to the houses of her wealthy neighbors, but in none did she recognize her benefactress. At last, on entering the church, she ran up and pointed out the picture of Our Lady as the one who had visited her. Astounded at such a favor, the good woman made every effort to advance in virtue, and by the intercession of the Holy Family made singular progress, bringing up her children in piety and devotion.

A missionary on the shores of Lake Superior experienced a no less striking protection. His flock were scattered far and wide in the forests, and the lake was his path from one station to another. Once he was about to leave a band of his Chippeways, when the chief pointed to the threatening sky, and warned the father not to try the treacherous lake; but he had promised, his children awaited him, and he launched his canoe. He had proceeded some distance when the storm came on; the paddles soon became useless, and snapped in his hand. Lying down in his canoe, Father Nouvel once more commended himself to the Holy Family, to whom he had offered himself when embarking. The frail bark was for a time dashed to and fro on the stormy billows, but at length he felt driven as though by an invisible force, and in a moment heard it grate on the beach. He leaped up and bounded to the shore; it was the very spot from which he had started, but all was now smoking embers. During his brief absence the lightning had struck a towering tree; the forest had been in flames; the Holy Family had saved him from a fearful death on the shore, and from being ingulfed in the storm-vexed lake. Kneeling down he poured forth his heartfelt thanks to Jesus, Mary and Joseph.



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We cannot then lack confidence in the Holy Family, when cases of their remarkable protection exist; but one thing we should especially seek, and may more confidently expect, and that is a happy death. If devotion to Saint Joseph alone is encouraged to obtain this favor, the favor which is indeed that of final perseverance—the burthen of so many prayers of Saint Alphonsus Liguori—surely devotion to the Holy Family, which teaches us to model our life not only on that of Saint Joseph, but also on the lives of Jesus and Mary, will be a far better preparation. Undoubtedly the best method to merit the death of Saint Joseph, the ineffable happiness of expiring in the arms of Jesus and Mary, is to endeavor in life to imitate the life of Joseph, like him, learning from Jesus and Mary how to fulfil each duty of our life in the highest perfection. And if, like Father Chaumonot, we seek this in life, we may, like him, hope to obtain in our last hours the bliss which made his dying moments a foretaste of paradise.

"The whole Church of Christ," says Monseigneur Laval, "would be one holy family, if the Christians of our days imitated those of the first ages, who had only one heart and one soul; and who regulated their lives by the purest maxims of the Gospel: then we should see the face of the earth happily renewed, and it would be the image of Paradise, where the saints all esteem themselves children of one Father, and members of the Holy Family of a God who has all a Father's love for them."

Be devout then, faithful Christian, to the Holy Family; let their names be often on your lips, address them frequently in prayer, model your life and family on this glorious model, and you will bless the day when you began a devotion so consoling, so dear to the Heart of Jesus, so bountifully rewarded here and hereafter, nor forget in your colloquies with the holy



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members of that Trinity on earth the sinner who thus feebly recommends the devotion.*

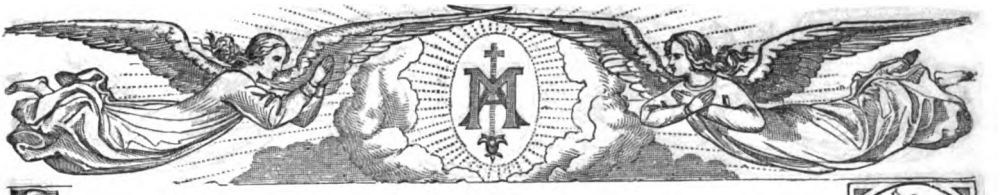
* The following is the prayer of the Holy Family, used in Canada: "Deus qui unigenitum tuum in corde tuo ab æterno viventem, in corde Virginis Matris, et ejus sanctissimi sponsi vivere et regnare in æternum voluisti; da nobis quæsumus per hanc sanctissimam familiam Jesu, Mariæ et Joseph, in corde uno vitam jugiter celebrare, cor unum inter nos et cum ipsis habere, tuamque in omnibus voluntatem cum Sanctis Angelis corde magno et animo volenti semper adimplere, ut secundum cor tuum à te inveniri mereamur. Per eundem."—"O God, who hast wished thy only begotten Son living from all eternity in thy heart, to live and reign for ever in the heart of the Virgin Mother and her most holy spouse, grant us, we beseech Thee, through this most Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, duly to honor their life in one heart, to have one heart among ourselves, and with them, and ever to fulfil thy will in all things with thy holy angels, with a generous heart and a willing mind, that we may merit to be found by Thee according to Thy heart, through the same Christ our Lord."

The collect in the office is:—"Deus qui salutis æternæ, per sanctissimam familiam Jesu, Mariæ, Joseph, humanæ generi præmia præstitisti; tribue, quæsumus, ut in quâ vitæ authorem nobis similem foris agnovimus, per eam intus reformari mereamur. Per eundem Dominum &c."





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LIVES

OF

ST. JOACHIM AND ST. ANNE.

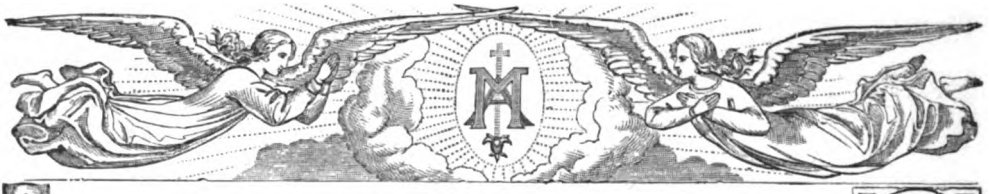






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LIVES

OF

SAINT JOACHIM AND SAINT ANNE,

PARENTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

BY

FATHER STEPHEN BINET,

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

WITH NOTES BY FATHER JOSEPH IGNATIUS VALLEJO.

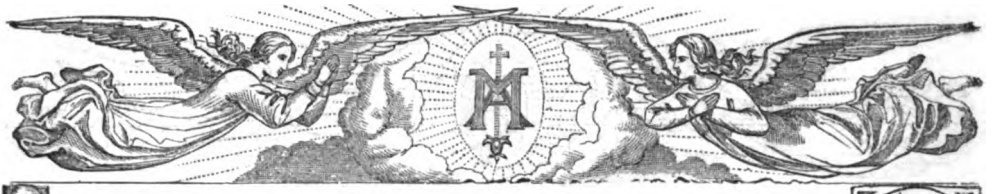


NEW YORK:
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CHAPTER I.

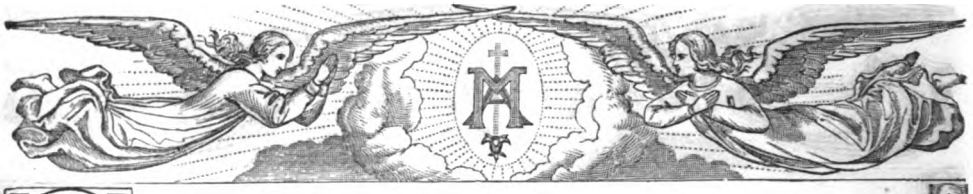
GENEALOGY OF SAINT JOACHIM AND SAINT ANNE.



HOLY SCRIPTURES pass over in profound silence alike the most holy life and illustrious names of Joachim and Anne, the illustrious parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Adoring with most profound respect the conduct of the Sovereign author of the sacred volumes, I think that the omission of the names and heroic deeds was to leave the history of such progenitors for those annals and that volume, where with most brilliant lights are inscribed the lives of the heroes who have most illustrated the world with his dignity, his ministry, and his example. This providence of heaven is seen even in the Only-begotten of the Father, Jesus Christ, of whose life, for the long space of thirty years, we simply know that he vouchsafed to be obedient to his parents. Scarcely any notice have we of the words and actions of the Blessed Virgin, in the seventy-two years that she lived among mortals. Of Saint Joseph (whose



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life we must suppose filled with wonderful events in consequence of his sacred ministry) there is little that we know with positive certainty. And so we must confess that the whole life of the greatest personages of the Church is concealed in an abyss of modesty and silence.

Nevertheless the Catholic Church,* enlightened by a constant tradition, holds for certain that Joachim and Anne were the real names of the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Hence Saint Joachim as well as Saint Anne were most noble, being descended in the tribe of Judea from the blood of David: because of Levi, the son of Melchi, a descendant of David by the branch of Nathan was born Panter, father of Bipanter whose son Saint Joachim was, according to the account of Saint John Damascenus. On the other hand, Nathan by his wife Mary had three daughters, the first of whom was called Mary† like her mother, the second Sobe,

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* Historians ask whether the parents of the Blessed Virgin bore the names of Joachim and Anne in this life, or whether they are mystical names given by the Church to signify their glorious destiny. The Bollandists (July 26), Serri, and other writers think that there is nothing to show that they were actually called Joachim and Anne; but the torrent of theologians and critics hold the contrary, as may be seen in Trombelli, *Life of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne* (ch. ii.) Tillemont, *Histoire Ecclesiastique* (I. 266), Calmet, *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (verbo *Anne*); Sedelmayr, *Theologia Mariana* (No. 151); Montague *Apparatus Biblicus*, Op. 8, num. 53. The last author, though a Protestant, says that the tradition of the Church as to the ancient and primitive names of Joachim and Anne, is so well received that only the rash and the shameless will oppose so ancient a tradition.

The names are indeed mystic; because Anne signifies *Grace*, and Joachim, *Preparation of the Lord*, or, according to Galatinas, *God raises and confirms*; but the mystical meaning, as we see in the case of Jesus and Mary, does not exclude the ancient and primitive meaning.

Father Alphonsus Nicolai (*Dissertazione* 6 *de Giuditta*) and Trombelli teach that Saint Joachim may have also been called Heli, according to the oriental and especially the Hebrew custom of having two names.

† This genealogy of Saint Anne, given by Binet, is taken from St. John Damascenus (*De fide Orthodoxa*, Lib. iv. chap. xv.), who is, however, at variance with the



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and the third Anne, the glorious mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The sacred doctors, relying, it is believed, on ancient traditions, affirm that Anne and Joachim led a most holy life, and have sufficient reason to affirm it, because the eternal wisdom and admirable providence of God having chosen them as progenitors of the Mother of the monarch of the universe, Jesus Christ, they could not but have been eminent in every virtue. The adorable Trinity, which had destined them to be parents of the queen of the universe, wished to try the firmness and constancy of their resignation, by afflicting them for the space of twenty years with an ignominious barrenness, which prevented their enjoying the fruit and blessing of their most chaste matrimony. But though the fecundity of nature

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authors cited by us in our Life of Saint Joseph. We must observe, however, that by a typographical error the text of St John Damascenus has, *Levi genuit Melchi*, instead of *Melchi genuit Levi*, for Melchi was father not son of Levi, as we read (Luke iii. 23.)

If we follow the learned Calinus (*Tom. iv. Lib. ii. ch.* 2), and Father Sianda (Life of the Blessed Virgin, ch. xi. and xvi.), we must say that the mother of God was of the blood of David on the side of her mother Saint Anne, and, according to the latter, on her father's side also. "It is an indisputable consequence that the holy parents of the mother of Jesus Christ descended in a right line from the royal race of David;" not only Saint Joachim, but also Saint Anne was an illustrious scion of the royal Davidic line; for, as Saint Joachim was a just man, he must in his marriage have followed the law, lain down in Numbers xxxvi. 1., forbidding men to marry out of their tribes.

Sianda, to uphold Binet's opinion as to the Mother of God, affirms that Saint Anne was a sister of Jacob, Saint Joseph's father: but he is contradicted by Sedelmeyr cited in the first chapter of the Life of Saint Joseph, and by other good writers, who think Mathan the father of Mary, Soba (Elizabeth's mother), and Saint Anne, was of the priestly order of Aaron; that is to say, that Saint Anne was not the daughter of the Mathan mentioned in Saint Matthew's gospel, as he was a descendant of David through Solomon. "There were three sisters at Bethlehem, daughters of Mathan a priest, and his wife (Mary): first Mary, next Soba who married in Bethlehem and bore Elizabeth, third Anne." (HIPPOLYTUS in *Nicephorus. Hist.* Lib. I. cap. ii.)

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was wanting, there was not wanting the proper spirit to recur humbly and fervently to the ancient mercies of heaven, whither they perpetually sent their sighs and prayers in order to obtain a child, whose birth might deliver them from the penalty and confusion of sterility, then considered among the Jews as a malediction and an infamy. The Almighty hearkened benignantly to their prayers, and on a certain occasion when Saint Joachim was praying on a hill of the desert, and Saint Anne under a laurel tree in her garden, with eyes lovingly raised to heaven they were consoled by a vehement inspiration which assured them that they should behold the fulfilment of their desires.* This favor happened on the eighth of the month of December, and on the eighth of the following September was born a daughter whom they called Mary,† giving her the name of her maternal grandmother.

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* "Joachim siquidem precabatur in monte et Anna in horto suo." "Joachim was praying on the mountain, and Anne in her garden." (St. Epiphanius. *Oratio de laudibus Virginis.*) "Videns laurum sedit sub ea et fudit preces Domino." Seeing the laurel, she sat down beneath it and poured forth her prayers to the Lord. *Ancient tradition embodied in the apocryphal gospel of St. James.*)

The Blessed Virgin was the true daughter of Saint Joachim, as Saint Epiphanius anciently showed against the Collyridians (Hær. 79, § 5), who pretended that Saint Anne bore her without the concurrence of Saint Joachim. Saint Bernard (Epist. 155, § 7) confirms the opinion of Saint Epiphanius and the sentiment of the Church. "Si licet loqui; quod Ecclesia sentit . . . dico: peperisse Virginem non tamen et partam a virgine."—"If I may speak; what the church thinks I say: The Virgin bore, yet was not herself born of a virgin.

† The Blessed Virgin was the only daughter of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne. Mary of Cleophas is styled in the gospel the sister of the Mother of God; but this relationship was not by nature, but by affinity, such as the wives of brothers have to each other. The husband of Mary, as Bellarmine teaches (*De septem verbis, Lib. I. ch.* viii.), was Cleophas, brother of Saint Joseph; and hence Mary of Cleophas is called sister of the Virgin. Saint Anne, according to Suarez, Canisius, Baronius, and other sound authors cited by Trombelli, had no other husband than Saint Joachim. (*Life of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne*, ch. xii. num. 11.)

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Had they done nothing but become parents* of the empress of the universe they would have exceeded all the inhabitants of the earth; because when we say that the Mother of God was born of Joachim and Anne, we say all that the mind can comprehend.

Having then obtained a daughter who exceeded the greatness of their expectations and desires (A. M. 3985–6) they educated her in the bosom of virtue, and when she was three years old, they presented her to the Lord in the temple, sacrificing in that amiable and precious treasure their heart and the consolation of their age. Both Anne and Joachim knew that that child was an excellent gift of God, and hence they freely restored her to the same Lord from whom they had received her, to be brought up with the other maidens in the temple. Never since the foundation of the world was a more agreeable or a more precious holocaust offered to the Almighty.

When the Virgin reached the age of fourteen, her parents, who, according to some writers, were still alive,‡ by divine inspiration betrothed her to Saint Joseph. Saint Joachim lived, according to the opinion of some writers, eighty years, and Saint Anne seventy-nine; hence it is conjectured that they died after the birth of the Messias. What gives some

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* Father Suarez, and the other authors, whom we have cited in the Life of Saint Joseph, affirm that the parents of the Blessed Virgin died when she was in her twelfth year. But Tillemont thinks that the fact of the Church celebrating their feast in ancient times, is a proof that they died after the birth of Christ; because, according to Saint Bernard, the Church, in the first ages, except the Macchabees, celebrated the feast of no Saint who passed to the other life before the birth of Christ. (TILLEMONT, *Tome I.* 465, *note* 3, *sur la Sainte Vierge.*)

The Abate Trombelli dissents from this opinion, and citing the menology of Basil says, that the parents of the Blessed Virgin died, either soon after the presentation in the Temple, or, as Cedrenus says, in her eleventh year. (TROMBELLI, *Life of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne*, ch. ix.)

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probability to this opinion is the advanced age of these saints, and some ancient paintings which represent them alive after the birth of Jesus, the obscurity of history which gives no light to determine this, and the divine goodness which would not apparently deny them this consolation after twenty years of confusion and shameful sterility, and other reasons which we omit, not to fail in the brevity of a compendious description.

Nothing is known on this point, and it would be conjecture to state as certain what cannot be positively ascertained. We can only believe and advance that they were the parents of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God: a felicity which would render probable the presence of Jesus, Mary and Joseph with all the heavenly court, at their passage to another life. Saint Joachim died on the ninth of March, according to the account of some historians, and Saint Anne on the twenty-sixth of July. It is nevertheless very difficult to state the year and all the circumstances of their death. The fact is, that the knowledge of these things is reserved for eternity.

Divine Providence * disposed that the feast of the glorious Saint Anne should be celebrated in the Church many years before that of her illustrious consort, Saint Joachim. In the East and in the West Saints have composed most elegant

* The Greeks celebrate the memory of Saint Anne three times a year, as appears from the menology of Saint Sabbas, where she is mentioned with her husband on the ninth of September thus: "The just and holy progenitors of God, Joachim and Anne." Then on the ninth day of December we find in the same: "The Conception of Saint Anne, mother of the Mother of God," and on the 15th of July: "Death of Saint Anne, mother of the Mother of God." (ACTA SANCTORUM, *ad diem* 26 *Julii*, *num.* 40.) "The cultus of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne is very ancient in the East, and more recent in the West. Pope Julius II. is believed to have instituted the feast of Saint Joachim on the 20th of March, about the year 1510. (CALMET, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, verbo *Joachim*.)

Now by a decree of Pope Clement XII. the feast of Saint Joachim is celebrated on the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption.

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homilies to extol her dignity and surpassing virtues. The faithful show their veneration by claiming to possess some of her most precious relics. France * glories in possessing her sacred body, of which many cities in Germany boast of possessing portions. The nuptial ring which Saint Joachim gave Saint Anne is preserved at Rome in a church dedicated to the mother of our Lady. Her miracles, which are innumerable and worthy of eternal remembrance, have been described by Trithemius, and later still by the Bollandists.

Ancient historians tell us that the Emperor Justinian I., about the year 550, reared a magnificent and costly church in her honor at Constantinople.† Finally, all that love and revere the Blessed Virgin Mary, have increased and promoted in every land devotion to her most holy mother. Our forefathers showed their devotion by composing in honor of Saint Anne a simple office such as was used in that golden age.

The feast of Saint Joachim, which began in the West with but little solemnity under the pontificate of Julius I., has received greater dignity in these later times; for Pope Gregory XV., evincing a singular love and veneration for this glorious parent of Mary, ordered his feast to be celebrated as a *double*.

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* The Bollandists treat of the relics of Saint Anne on the 16th of July, § 9, 10. Trombelli adds, that the Carthusians of Bologna possess the head of Saint Anne, or at least a part, which Henry VI., king of England, bestowed on the blessed Nicholas Albergati. (*Life of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, ch.* xiii.)

† Tillemont, speaking of devotion to Saint Anne, especially in the East, says: "Procopius tells us, that Justinian I., about 550, erected a beautiful church at Constantinople in honor of a Saint Anne, believed by some to be the mother of the Blessed Virgin, and grandmother of Christ. Condinus says that Justinian II., after his elevation (750), erected a church of Saint Anne, in consequence of an apparition of the Saint, whose body was translated to Constantinople in his reign. Other churches of Saint Anne were afterwards erected at Constantinople. As for the Latin Church, we find that about the year 800, Pope Leo III. had the life of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne worked on a vestment." (*Tom. I.* p. 460.)

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The saint is entitled to our veneration, for, as Saint John Damascenus says,* if we consider well the dignity of Saint Anne's spouse, that progenitor of Christ, the human heart cannot but be inflamed with intense desire of honoring him with signal marks of love and serving him with tenderness.

The body of this most happy saint is said to be preserved at Venice.† If this is well founded, the noble Venetians should preserve it in a reliquary of finest gold, studded with diamonds and the most precious gems of the East. His glory cannot but be most exalted; for even in heaven, according to the pious John Gerson, he formed with Saint Anne, his daughter Mary and Saint Joseph, the family of Jesus Christ. We should, therefore, have great confidence in his intercession, hoping to be rewarded for our devotion with abundant favors.

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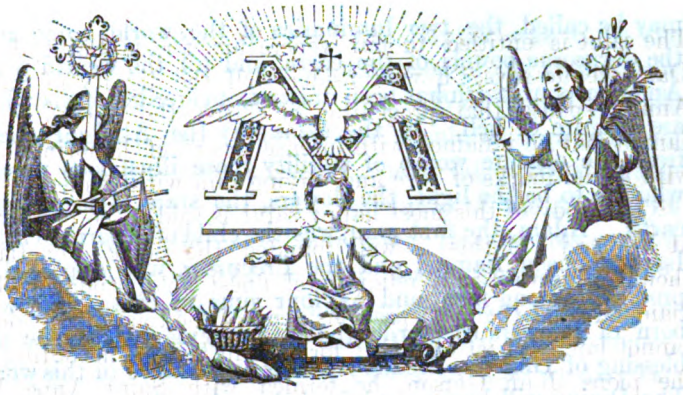
* Saint John Damascenus is not the only panegyrist of Saint Joachim. Other celebrated writers have also proclaimed his praises. One of these was Fulbert of Chartres, who, in a sermon on the birth of the Virgin, says: "Felix et præ cæteris patribus felicior, qui tantæ prolis meruit vocitari patrator. Felix et jam, qui non plures, sed unam promeruit suscipere natam, quæ unicum conciperet, et proferret Dei filium."—"Happy Joachim, happier far than other fathers, who was found worthy to be called father of such a daughter. Happy Joachim, who was found worthy to rear a daughter who conceived and bore the only Son of God."

† The celebrated critics Henschenius and Papebroke, the Bollandists, do not mention Venice, but say that there are relics of Saint Joachim at Cologne and Bologna. In Bologna, in the church of St. Paul of the Reformed Franciscans; in Cologne, in the Church of the Macchabees. The latter relic is said to be the head. (ACTA SANCTORUM, *ad diem* 26 *Martii.*)





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CHAPTER II.

OF THE MYSTERIOUS STERILITY OF ST. JOACHIM AND ST. ANNE.

IT is the custom of God and the course of nature to draw the most precious treasures from barren earth, as though sterility were the origin and mother of plenty.* The universe sprung from the abyss of nothingness; the birth of the world began by a heaven bereft of that splendor which the stars subsequently gave it, and an earth destitute of the beauties of those flowers which rival the stars of the firmament. It is, too, astounding to see that the rarest and most stupendous efforts of nature rise in most sterile and desert tracts. Gold and silver, which

* Et cur vero Virgo Mater orta est ex sterili? Plane quia oportebat, ut ad id, quod solum sub sole novum futurum erat et prodigiorum caput, via per prodigia sterneretur."—"And why was the Virgin Mother born of a sterile one? Clearly because it was becoming, that prodigy should prepare for the prodigy of prodigies, the only thing new under the sun. (Saint John Damascenus, *Hom. I. de Nativitate Virginis.*)



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may be called the two luminaries of the world, come from the darksome bowels of the earth, and all the wealth which America pours forth has been drawn from sterile depths which are a figure of hell. In the same way the Almighty draws from the obscure womb of sterility those illustrious persons who are to be the light, the flowers, the stars of heaven and earth. Adam, the first man, was the child of a barren earth; Isaac, Samson, Samuel and the Precursor, who appeared as prodigies among men, and as four suns of those ages, were born of mothers so sterile that a particular assistance and blessing of God was needed for their appearance in this world. The Divine will having ordained then that the most sublime heroes should derive their origin from persons to whom nature had denied fruitfulness, it became the Mother of God, that rare miracle of the universe, to be born of sterile parents.

But some one may say, if God had chosen Saint Joachim and Saint Anne to be the progenitors of Jesus, why did he not fill them with fruitfulness? They were without any fruit of their union for the space of twenty years, and had almost lost hopes of having a child to gladden their old age by its birth. They were already sacrificed in their own hearts to that ignominy, which the Jews then attributed to sterility as a misfortune and curse of God. What mystery was hidden in these circumstances? What could be the counsel of the Eternal Wisdom in this matter? But who can enter the closet and the inscrutable designs of the providence of the Most High? The greatest fortune of these two consorts was the happy misfortune of sterility. Had nature endowed them with a prodigious fecundity, their daughter would have been as ordinary as all the rest of the individuals of the species. But having been obtained by a singular favor of heaven, that miraculous daughter could not but be the phœnix of the universe, without a competitor among angels or men; for, as



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Saint Peter Chrysologus says,* the Baptist was to be the greatest of mortals, because he exceeded in his coming the common laws of those who are born. With better grounds we may say that the Mother of God should be born of sterile parents, that thus both angels and men might see a miracle superior to the other works and prodigies of the Almighty's arm. The same saint and Saint John Damascenus explain to us the conception and birth of this unequalled creature, by telling us with a sublime and acute intellect that nature was awe-struck and dismayed, that she retired with reverence, leaving grace first to produce its effects, so that we may call Mary the daughter rather of grace than of human nature. "*Ut esset filia gratiæ et non naturæ.*" †

All the virtues and sanctity of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne aided in forming that Virgin, who was to be the field of every grace. This sterility, we may believe, was full of profound mysteries; not a curse, but a most holy and discreet providence of heaven. Of barren Sarah was born an Isaac by a singular grace of the Almighty; and of Saint Anne, who fluctuated for twenty years between fear and hope, was born the Virgin Mary. She hoped long, for works of the highest perfection are not conceived in a few years. But when the patience of the parents was tried, they had by the efforts of divine favor the rare felicity of giving birth to a daughter more splendid than the sun, more beauteous than the dawn, and of a capacity greater than the heavens, as she conceived a God within her womb.

* "Probatur major homine, qui in ortu suo excedit legem nativitatis humanæ." —"She is evinced more than human who in her birth exceeds the law of human nativity." (St. Peter Chrysologus, *Serm.* 91.)

† "Quoniam futurum erat ut Dei genitrix et virgo ex Anna oriretur, natura gratiæ fœtum antevertere minime ausa est, verum tantisper expectavit, dum gratia fructum suum produxisset. (Saint John Damascenus, *Orat. I. de Nativitate Mariæ Virginis.*)



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CHAPTER III.

OF THE PREROGATIVES OF ST. JOACHIM AND ST. ANNE.

KINGS, prophets, patriarchs and pontiffs, had heaved many a sigh to heaven in order to hasten the fulfilment of the divine mercies, and see the birth of the mother of that Sun of Justice, who was to be the supreme physician of all our sorrows. But of all these heroic men none had the glory of seeing his desire fulfilled, for heaven had reserved this advantage to Saint Joachim and Saint Anne for their excellent virtues and the exact observance of the law.* God from that eternity when

* Ces traditions portent, que le père de la Sainte Vierge etoit un h mme célébre pour ses bonnes œuvres et extrémement exact à observer la loy de Dieu; mais qu'il demeura jusqu' à un age fort avancé sans avoir d'enfans à cause de la stérilité de sa femme. L'un et l'autre employèrent donc les prières et toutes sortes de bonnes œuvres, pour obtenir de Dieu un enfant. Et Anne imitant l'autre Anne, Mère de Samuel. . . Dieu accorda à Anne la grace de la fécondité, et Joachim etoit dans le desert, un ange lui vint dire, que sa femme avait conçu. (TILLEMONT, Tom. I. note 4, sur la naissance de la Sainte Vierge.)

Joachim ergo lectissimam illam et summis laudibus dignam mulierem Annam

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he decreed the coming of the Messias, chose them as parents of the Virgin Mary, and consequently resolved also to enrich them with the qualities most suited to their destiny. Let us, as the foundation of the felicity of these two enlightened souls, take as established the fact of their surviving the birth of Jesus, as the church seems to show by her ancient feast in their honor, and as some paintings of past ages represent. On this many glories depend, exalting these prerogatives which, from the splendor and character of the dignity of the ancestors of Jesus, scarcely fall within the powers of human language.

The first prerogative of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne was to have been chosen by God, amid so many thousand heroes and persons of rare sanctity, as parents of the Virgin Mary. Saint John Damascenus,* and other celebrated writers,† say that if we measure the tree by the fruit, the

matrimonio sibi copulavit.—Joachim therefore took in marriage Anne, that most elect woman, worthy of all praise. (Saint John Damascenus, De fide orthodoxa, Lib. IV. ch. xv.)

* Quam beata domus David, ex qua, O Anna, prodiisti? Vere beata es, ac ter beata quæ beatitudine donatam a Deo infantem, hoc est, Mariam, nomine quoque ipso magnopere venerandam peperisti ex qua Christus vitæ flos extitit.—How blessed is the house of David from which thou didst spring, O Anna? Truly blessed and thrice blessed thou, who didst bring forth a child endowed by God with beatitude, that is, Mary venerable for her very name, from whom came forth Christ, the flower of life. (Saint John Damascenus, *Orat. II. de Nativitate Mariæ.*)

† Attesta Teofilo Rainaudo, *Diptic Marian, part* 1. *punc.* 4, esservi stato chi abbia preposto a tutto gli altri Sante S. Gioacchino. Cio altri concedono ad Anna madre de Maria Vergine e produce le testimonianze di coteste Dottori il P. Gioanni Tommaso de S. Cirillo nel libro piu volte da me allegato, intitolato Mater honorificata. *Ex his tamen* (cosi scrive egli) *gravissimis fundamentis quæ hactenus in favorem sanctitatis S. Annæ produximus, haud obscure licet concludere altaque voce personare, Annam post natam Divis omnibus sanctiorem, cap.* 39, *p.* 416, *&c.* Benché poscia alquanto limiti la generale sua proposizione col protestare che di Giuseppe non vuol far questione: onde non vuol definire, che sia maggiore fra queste due S. Giuseppe e S. Anna. Pure in avvienre non teme di proporre S. Gioacchino a S.

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sun by its rays, and virtue or dignity by its effects, we must ingenuously confess that these two illustrious personages, Joachim and Anne exceed in prerogatives and the light of sanctity all classes of Saints ; for as parents they were master and mistress of the Sovereign Mother of God. And truly was it a spectacle of wonder, to see Joachim and Anne command her who was to command in heaven and on earth even the very Son of God, who for thirty years vouchsafed to be subject to her. Besides these honors they had authority over their daughter, and all those rights which nature as well as human and divine laws give parents, when they prescribe the power enjoyed by them over their descendants, in the right line. This being so, we must admit that Saint Joachim and Saint Anne were adorned with sublime prerogatives ; because the glorious title of parents of Mary means, that they had under their command as daughter, the very Mother of God ; as son-in-law Saint Joseph, and in some sort Jesus as true son of Mary, and all creatures who are under the throne of the Man-God, and monarch of the Universe, and under the jurisdiction of his Mother, the Queen of heaven and earth ; as all that is in the power of the daughter belongs in some sort to the parents, we have in Saint Joachim and Saint Anne immense treasures, and we may hope from their powerful intercession, great favors from that Virgin Mother, to whose will and authority Christ her son deigned to subject himself. When I see such greatness in these two sublime spirits, I know not what names to give them. The valiant generals of Alexander the Great, when invited to his table, took the names of some of the twelve fabulous deities ; but I know not what name to give those who form the family of Jesus. I cannot

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Giuseppe. *Excedit præterea D. Joachimus Sanctum Josephum prærogativa sanctitatis.* (TROMBELLI, *cap.* 8, *num.* 8.)

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doubt but that David spoke principally of the individuals of this sacred family, when he said: "Ye are gods, and ye are all children of the Most High." But if words fail us to give a perfect idea of their greatness, we can, if nothing more, say with the eloquent Saint John Chrysostom, that from being allied to Christ they were every where called Lords, or the family of Our Lord, and were every where held in respect and admiration.

We cannot deny that these titles are sublime and truly incomparable; but for my part, I am most overawed by the prerogative which they enjoyed of being styled grandparents of the Messias,* and in a certain manner his parents. Hence, observing due proportions, we may apply to these illustrious progenitors the eulogiums given to the Mother of the Man-God. I am well aware of the great difference and distance between the Blessed Virgin and her holy parents; but I also understand that next to the Mother of God, there is no creature to whom greater titles and honors can be given than to Saint Anne and Saint Joachim. Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres,† considering the prerogatives of these two consorts, says, that Saint Anne, the spouse of Saint Joachim, so excelled all mothers, that there has never been nor can be one like her in this world. Gerson exceeds himself when he contemplates the prerogatives and felicity of the parents of the Mother of God. The home of such servants of God must have been, continues Fulbert, "surrounded by angels, who overshadowed with their radiant wings the Virgin Queen of

* Tali dote donata es, O Anna, qua nulla ante te, et post te meruit antecellere. (FULBERT, *Oratio de ortu Virginis.*)

† Vere in altis sedibus cœlorum Anna præpotens, cujus filia cœli Domina et Nepos ejus omnipotens . . . Virtutibus ornata omnibus; clara genere, clarior miraculis. (BARTHOLOMEW OF TRENT, *Life of Saint Anne.*)

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all the celestial hierarchies, and who at the same time inspired Saint Joachim and Saint Anne as to the proper education of that princess of heaven. An angel who appeared to Saint Bridget declared another pre-eminence of the Mother of the Blessed Virgin in these words, which express the immense riches which the Almighty poured into that blessed soul: "Anne was the treasury of the Almighty. And as where the treasure is, there is the heart, the Divine Heart was most near this richest treasure." *

As to Saint Joachim, what emperor, even of the four quarters of the earth, can be compared to this most holy patriarch? He commanded the Holy Family, and for all eternity will have the glory of regarding Jesus, Mary, Anne and Joseph as though they were the north, south, east and west, or a map of more than the universe. Aristotle styled happy the stones which served for altars and sacrifices of the gods, and declared that metal most worthy of esteem of which the statues of the deities were made. What would he not have said had he known, that of the substance of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne was to be formed the Mother of the Almighty God, by a marvellous concourse of grace? The Church in a few words gives us a full idea of Saint Anne's happiness, telling us in the Collect of her office, that the Lord had given her the grace by which she merited to be mother of the Mother of God. Of Saint Joachim as father we may utter the same sentiment. Whoever can compre-

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* Anna erat Omnipotens Dei gazophylacium, et quia ubi thesaurus est, ibi et cor erit, O quam prope erat cor Dei huic thesauro. (St. Bridget, *Revelations*, *ch.* x.)

O Joachim afflatu divino decore! Tu quoque Anna divinitus clara! Vos gemini estis lychni, a quibus orta est lampas, circa quam nullum umbræ vestigium cernimus. Vos quoque abundanter implevit ipsamet Dei gratia, id est, Genitrix Dei. (St. Sabbas, *in suo typico.*)

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hend the dignity of being parents of the Mother of God, will realize the fortune and prerogatives of those two souls whom heaven filled with benedictions. What a spectacle of admiration for the angels to behold Saint Anne instructing her who was to be the Mistress of the Apostles! O fortunate parents! shall I say? O suns of heaven and of the Church! What obligations do earth and heaven owe you for bestowing on them this glorious daughter, who next to the Deity is the glory of mortals! With what respect do the angelic hosts behold you, when they acknowledge in you the immediate progenitors of the Queen and Lady of the spheres. With what flames of love did God regard you, when he contemplated in your arms the centre of his love, the magnet of his delight! The Almighty confided to you the most precious of his treasures, which he had placed on earth! Would, O luminaries most favorable to our prayers, would that we mortals were worthy to bestow our admiration on the splendor of your incomparable prerogatives, and give due thanks to the Lord, who so enriched you as to make you worthy to be parents of her who is Mother of God and treasurer of his favors.



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CHAPTER IV.

OF THE EMINENT VIRTUES OF SAINT JOACHIM AND SAINT ANNE.

THE silence of the ancients and the singular modesty of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne have deprived posterity of the history of their lives. Nevertheless as these two glorious parents, like the sun and moon when obscured by the veil of clouds and night, dart their rays through, revealing themselves to the children of earth, we cannot but discover some traits of their virtues in conformity with their sacred destiny and ministry. We cannot doubt but that God, whose honor was interested in these circumstances, granted them the sanctity and advantages which befitted the parents of the Redeemer's Mother. That is to say in brief, he adorned them with all the precious treasures of heaven, comprised in the words PARENTS OF MARY, which signify all that we can figure to ourselves. Without leaving

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my own land I will explain it by an example. The expression *king of France*, comprises the idea of one of the most flourishing monarchies now in the world ; so that he whose fortune it is to be king of the three *fleurs de lys*, comprises in two words, what may be described in volumes. So too these illustrious Saints, having under them Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the three golden lilies of the Universe, include in this title such grandeur that no other splendor is needed.

Philip, the ancient king of Macedon, has all his prerogatives abridged in the famous name of father of Alexander the Great, in such sort that all the honor of that great monarch was to be styled father of Alexander the Great ; * and all the greatness of that princely conqueror of kingdoms and empires was to be son of Philip, king of Macedon. But we, without comparing the Blessed Virgin to Philip and Alexander, must say, that in the name of parents of the Mother of God, are abridged the excellencies, the virtues, the merits, the splendor and nobility of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne.

Nevertheless, I shall relate, in detail, some rays of virtue which those two radiant lights show forth amid the silence and obscurity of the ancients. The gospel of the birth of Mary, an apocryphal work, but written in the first ages of the Church,† says that Saint Joachim and Saint Anne were

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* Philippe, sufficit te filium genuisse Alexandrum. (*Græcus orator in panegyr. dicto Philippo, Macedoniæ regi.*)

† Apocryphal books have no authority, but from their antiquity deserve some respect, as Calmet notes (in his dissertation on Saint Joseph, and in his Dictionary of the Bible, *verbo* Anne), on those points in which the Holy Fathers have received them, and in which they do not clash with traditions of the church. "I do not insist on the authority of these books (he is speaking of the Protevangelion of James, the Gospel of the birth of the Virgin, and the book of the Infancy of Our Lord), but on their age, and the testimony of an old received tradition"—"Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, and wife of Saint Joachim." These names nowhere occur in the canonical Scriptures, but are found in very old writings, which,

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blameless before God and men. To give authority to this, I shall avail myself of the words of that Epiphanius who proclaimed the praises of the Virgin Mary, or of Fulbert, who flourished in the eleventh century, first as Chancellor of Robert and Henry I. kings of France, and then Bishop of Chartres, and in the next place of Andrew of Crete and of Nicephorus. In his panegyric on the only daughter of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, Saint Epiphanius says: "The Blessed Virgin was of the family of King David, a daughter truly holy, and born of holy parents; her parents were Joachim and Anne, who in the tenor of their holy life pleased God, and also gave this fruit. By their prayers they obtained the Blessed Virgin. Joachim was praying on the mountain, and Anne in her garden." Andrew of Crete describes the virtues of these two Saints more particularly in these words: "Joachim was as gentle as modest, and led a life so based on the observance of the Divine laws, that he never departed from God. Anne loved the Lord, was chaste, and, like her spouse, remarkable for the virtue of temperance, but she was barren." Nicephorus in his history, writing generally, says that "Joachim and Anne lived according to the most exact observance of the law, and were enlightened and holy in their ways." *

Fulbert, justly esteemed by the Bollandists and other critics, gives this honorable account of the parents of the Mother of God: "The Blessed Virgin was born, according to the Holy Fathers, in the city of Nazareth. Her father

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though not of authority, especially in the western Church, still deserve respect. The names are given by the Holy Fathers, nor is there wanting a strong tradition in favor of these names in the Church, which has granted public honors to Joachim and Anne.

* NICEPHORUS, *Book II. ch. 7.*

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was named Joachim, and was a patrician of that city. Her mother was Anne of the city of Bethlehem. The life of both was spotless, sincere and good, before God, and irreprehensible and pious before men. Their income they divided into three parts, one for the temple and the sacrifices, one for the poor and the wayfarer, and the last and least for the expenses of their house. In a word, they so lived, that God bestowed on them the grace of being progenitors of that Blessed Virgin who was to be the example of the beauteous variety of virtues." † Nature denied them fruitfulness, but by devotion they obtained of heaven a daughter more precious than all angels and all men together. Before obtaining her, they promised to consecrate to God the fruit of their union, if He gave them issue, and so faithful were they, that when the child completed her third year, they presented and offered her in the temple, thus depriving themselves of the

† FULBERT OF CHARTRES, *Serm. II. on the birth of the Virgin.* He teaches expressly, that Saint Joachim and Saint Anne had an income or property which they divided into three parts. If we may credit the Protevangelion of St. James, this income was large. Eustachius, in the commentary called Hexæmeron, published by Leo Allatius, speaks more clearly. An account, given by an author called James, is certainly worth knowing. Speaking of the Blessed Virgin, he says: "In the tribes of Israel there was a rich man named Joachim, who on festival days offered to God sacrifices twice as great as the rest. An angel appearing to him, told him that he should have issue, and he instantly promised to offer the child to God. When this occurred Joachim was in the wilderness, and descending to his house, he sent to the temple ten sheep for a sacrifice, and a banquet for the priests, ancients, and people."

Henschenius and Papebroke (March 20, § 11, num. 207) with no better grounds than a simple conjecture, as they admit, suppose Saint Joachim to have had no goods but a few sheep, of which he was himself the shepherd. Even supposing their conjecture correct, we must nevertheless admit that Saint Joachim and Saint Anne were noble, and not suffering from poverty, as Luther pretends to degrade them. The employment of shepherd, carpenter, and fisherman were not irreconcilable or incompatible with the splendor of nobility among the Hebrews, as Sianda shows.

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only solace of their old age. It is said that an angel announced to them that they should have a daughter, to whom they were to give the name of Mary, and who was to be the Mother of the Messias. The angel also directed them to make of that child a sacrifice and a holocaust to the Lord, and he afterwards accompanied them when they presented her in the temple, preferring God's pleasure to their own consolation and interest.

But what resolution and generosity were needed for Joachim and Anne to tear from their heart that child on whom they had set all their affections! This was observing perfectly before the publication of the gospel the evangelical law of sacrificing to God the heart in the treasure of its delights. What I most admire in the parents of the Virgin is, not so much the generous courage with which they presented her in the temple, as the rare humility and resignation with which they bore without a single complaint that twenty years' barrenness, in those days a confusion and an opprobrium. From their lips fell no word expressive of repining; on the contrary, they adored the Providence of the Lord, deeming themselves unworthy of all consolation. Desolation and sterility were in their pious hearts an incentive to virtue, and all virtues indeed shone in those two souls like an exquisite mosaic.

Saint Peter Chrysologus, speaking of Saint Elizabeth, the Mother of the Precursor of the Messias, says, that she beautifully united in her heart all the sanctity of her ancestors, and thus became worthy to bear a son, the holiest man born upon the earth. With better reason may we say this of those who were progenitors of the Sovereign Mother of the Man-God. Saint Epiphanius writes that the very name of Joachim (which means *preparation*), when we consider the ancient ways of Providence, shows that the Saint was destined to prepare the holy and magnificent temple of the



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living God, and that Saint Anne (which signifies *grace*) was to be the mother of her who was predestined to bring forth that grace which the Lord had promised, and who was to be the Temple, the Heaven, and the Throne of the Almighty. All this exceeds the capacity of the human mind ; and I am not therefore astonished that the pious Trithemius, after pondering on all that we can apparently say of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, concludes his panegyric by protesting that all he had said was nothing, and that the most precious remained in silence.

Grave theologians place the parents of Mary in that superior grade, which is called the order of the hypostatic union, which is composed of those more immediately destined than other creatures to serve the Incarnate Word. Admitting the doctrine of these theologians, we may consequently affirm, that Joachim and Anne were adorned with all the singular graces and virtues,* which corresponded to their dignity and sacred ministry, which was to prepare a habitation and a Mother for Jesus Christ, the King of kings. Heaven adorned Saint Joseph, who was chosen to be the spouse of the Mother of God and putative father of the Saviour, with all the virtues and graces that were necessary to the honorable functions † of his dignity, giving us in

* Illos quos Deus ad aliquid eligit, ita præparat et disponit, ut id ad quod eliguntur, inveniantur idonei. (St. Thomas, *in* 3 *part. de Salv. q.* 27, *art.* 4.)

† Omnium singularum gratiarum ali cui rationabili creaturæ communicatarum generalis regula est, quod quandocumque divina gratia eligit aliquem ad aliquam gratiam singularem, seu ad aliquem sublimem statum, omnia charismata donat, quæ illi personæ sic electæ, et ejus officio necessaria sunt, atque illam copiose decorant . . . Quod maxime verificatum est in Sancto Joseph, Putativo Patre Domini Nostri Jesu Christi et vero sponso Reginæ Mundi et Dominæ Angelorum, qui ab Æterno Patre electus, et fidelis Nutritius, atque custos principalium thesaurorum suorum, scilicet Filii ejus, et Sponsæ suæ, quod officium fidelissime prosecutus est;

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these examples of liberal magnificence, an idea and a proof of God's providence and mode of action, when he chooses any one for a sublime ministry.

I have nothing more to add either to the life of Saint Joseph, or to that of the parents of the Blessed Virgin, except these words, which I borrow from Pliny : * "It is difficult to give novelty to the old, authority to the new, splendor to what is obsolete, light to what is obscure, grace to what is tedious, fidelity to what is doubtful, nature to all and all to nature. If we have failed, it is glorious enough to have made the attempt. Much, doubtless, has escaped us, for we are men."

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cui propterea ait Dominus verbum propositum : *Serve bone et fidelis, intra in gaudium Domini tui.* (Matt. xxv.) St. Bernardine of Sienna, *in Serm. S. Josephi.*

* Res ardua vetustis novitatem dare, novis auctoritatem, obsoletis nitorem, obscuris lucem, fastiditis gratiam, dubiis fidem, omnibus vero naturam et naturæ omnia. Itaque etiam non assecutis, voluisse, abunde pulchrum est atque magnificum . . . Nec dubitamus, multa esse quæ nos præterierint. Homines enim sumus. (Pliny, *Hist. Nat. præm.*)



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LETTER OF MONSIGNOR BEDINI ACCEPTING THE DEDICATION OF THIS WORK.

ILLME DOMINE.

Quam operis Hiſpanice conſcripti cui titulus VITA SANCTI JOSEPHI, Anglicam verſionem dedicaſti mihi eam gratanter admodum, ac libenter prorſus animo excepi. Etenim præterquam quod ipſa re præclarum erga me humanitatis tuæ argumentum exhibueris, iis etiam in eo officio impendendo uſus es verbis, quæ peculiari me jucunditate affecerunt. In mei enim memoriam præter alia quæ ad graviſſima mihi a SSmo DNO Noſtro Pio PP. IX in ſua temporali ditione demandata munera referuntur, revocaſti apoſtolicam qua functus ſum in Septentrionali America legationem, cujus quidem occaſione etſi moleſta quædam atque adverſa contigerint mihi, quæ tamen in Domino expertus ſui gaudia ac conſolationes longe admodum illis præſtiterunt. Quæ quidem eo menti meæ ſuaviores recurrunt quod inclitæ Americanæ gentis ſive religioni ac pietati, ſive comitati atque honeſtati morum unice accepta referuntur. Quare et ejus vitæ meæ temporis, et virtutum, quibus populi præſtant Americæ ex animo meo nunquam excidet memoria. Beatiſſimæ Virginis Imagini, quæ in Ariminenſi colitur civitate exemplar laudatæ verſionis pietatis tuæ teſtimonium libentiſſime, ut optas, offerendum curabo. Ceterum in iis omnibus quæ ad tui commodum atque utilitatem pertinebunt, voluntatis meæ propenſionem paratiſſimam eſſe ſcias.

Interim omnia fauſta tibi adprecando ex animo permaneo.

Dnis Tuæ Illmæ Addictiſſimus

CAJETANUS BEDINI,

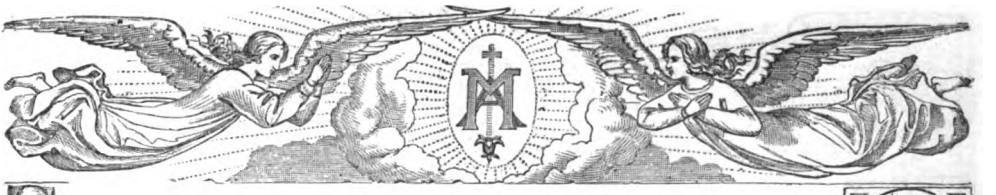
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S. C. de P. F.



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